

Literacies, Learning & Libraries

Collections and Inquiry: Partners in the Process



ASLC

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Collections and the Research Process



How much time have you spent lately thinking about your school library's collection? Is the collection something you continually monitor and tweak? Or have you given it very little attention? Do you feel a twinge of guilt about its current state, or about the lack of a collection development policy to guide you when you suddenly have cash in your hands? These are perhaps uncomfortable questions, but they are questions we really need to consider.

For the past decade, we have been dogged by very real fiscal constraints, we constantly lack time because our programs consume all our designated library time, and we face the pressure of keeping up with current and emerging technologies. Despite all this, sometime during the school year we need to focus on the backbone of our school library: the collection.

Students in Lois Barranoik's course on school library collection development (EDES 541), which is part of the University of Alberta's Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program, have grappled with this vitally important part of school libraries. They have graciously agreed to share their thoughts in this issue of *Literacies, Learning & Libraries*. I hope these articles inspire you to revisit the work of collection development in your library, especially in relation to digital resources.

A strong school library collection in turn supports inquiry-based learning. The retrieval phase of any information search process (ISP) is thoroughly tested each time our students begin a new project. Several articles that reflect on integrating Alberta's current ISP—*Focus on Inquiry*—in classrooms in Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia make up the balance of feature articles. The authors were students in a course on school library information materials (EDES 546) offered in the Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program.

You may or may not be aware that Alberta School Library Council (ASLC) members have access to a number of new communication tools on the Web. Check out ASLC webmaster Joanne de Groot's article, which serves as a guide to the ASLC blog, wiki and Ning network. Joanne and I look forward to meeting and chatting with you online this fall.

I cannot wrap up this editorial without urging you to carefully read Judith Sykes's update on Alberta Education's School Library Services Initiative. In one short year, Judith has brought us many steps closer to a new school library policy and revised standards for school libraries in Alberta. Please share the details of her update with as many colleagues and administrators as will listen, because this work will affect much of what we do in Alberta school libraries in the coming decade. Remember that your feedback on this work is valued, so please take the time to contact Judith (judith.sykes@gov.ab.ca) with your comments and questions. 🐞

—Diane GallowaySolowan

President's Message

Welcome to a new year for school libraries in Alberta! School libraries are once again at the forefront of educational dialogue thanks to the tireless work of Judith Sykes, school library resource manager with Alberta Education, and the work of previous Alberta School Library Council (ASLC) executives. Thanks also go to our past president, Fern Reirson, for her leadership and direction in bringing the School Library Services Initiative to the table. I don't know that this would have happened without the work of this council. We're looking forward (with fingers and toes crossed) to the release of Alberta Education's new school library policy and standards document in January 2010. Check out the latest FAQs on the School Library Services Initiative at <http://education.alberta.ca/departement/ipr/slsi.aspx>.

I thank all members for renewing your membership to the ASLC, and I welcome new members. Without your support, this important and critical work couldn't be done.

What's on the horizon for the ASLC?

The ASLC executive will be meeting in January to develop a three-year strategic plan. Executive members from across the province will come together for a two-day planning and visioning session, which will help us determine the next steps for our council.

Our tough economic times will likely have an impact on the thrust of Alberta Education's new library policy. Funding most certainly will be an issue in meeting the new standards. Perhaps powerful conversations about how else it could be will spurn innovation and change for school libraries across our province.

The rollout of new policy and library implementation models will require much training and innovative inservicing models. I believe that our members will be called upon in unique and thoughtful ways to share their expertise in coaching and mentoring roles in a distance distributed learning system.

Most important, meeting the needs of 21st-century learners will require a paradigm change regarding how school libraries look, feel and operate. David Loertscher's work on the 21st-century learning commons is setting the direction for many school districts across North America. (See <http://schoollearningcommons.pbworks.com>.)

It's an unsettling time, a challenging time and a hopeful time. But we're up for it. We've been waiting for 10 years for a rainbow to shine through the clouds, and now it's happening. Step up and be counted—advocate for your school library program today, and encourage new members to join our council. 🐼

—Betty-Lou Ayers

Teacher-Librarians and School Library Collection Development

Lois Barranoik

Lois Barranoik is a sessional instructor in the University of Alberta's Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program.

Imagine going for the first time to your school library and discovering that most of the collection is at least 10 years old—no recent novels, no graphic novels, no exciting picture books, and only a few computers with access to the Online Reference Centre and the Internet. Unfortunately, this is the experience of too many K–12 students in Alberta. Does it happen because of a lack of funding, a lack of administrative will or a lack of knowledge? Or is it a combination of all three?

Periodically, libraries receive funding to purchase new materials; however, collection development is more than merely adding new resources, as outlined by Bishop (2007, 9):

Collection development is comprised of numerous activities that are dependent upon one another.

- Becoming knowledgeable about an existing collection.
- Becoming familiar with the school and community.
- Assessing the needs of the school's curriculum and other programs.
- Assessing the specific needs of the users.
- Establishing collection development policies and procedures.
- Identifying criteria for selection of materials.
- Planning for and implementing the selection process.
- Acquiring and processing materials.
- Participating in resource sharing.
- Maintaining and preserving the collection.
- Providing physical and intellectual access to materials.
- Evaluating the collection.


Fiscal responsibility demands that both selection and deselection be based on sound criteria and well-developed, clearly articulated collection policies. School Library Collection Development (EDES 541),

a course in the University of Alberta's Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program, focuses on principles and practices related to the development and management of a school's collection of information resources. The course is designed to prepare teachers and teacher-librarians to work together in planning, building and maintaining information resource collections and resource-sharing systems, and in handling the related issues and demands that arise. The course's learning outcomes are as follows:

- Understanding the basics of collection building
- Identifying and utilizing appropriate selection tools
- Selecting appropriate curricular resources
- Designing selection and maintenance policies and procedures
- Evaluating materials
- Discussing copyright and censorship issues
- Understanding the importance of resource sharing and networking as part of collection development

Sharing ideas and resources is emphasized throughout the course. For example, after they have completed each of the first two assignments, students post them online and share them with classmates. The final assignment for the course is a paper, to be written in an article format suitable for sharing with a wider audience and for possible publication in a school library journal. Students are encouraged to focus on one of two topics: (1) an issue related to building a school library collection, or (2) developing a collection development policy (either a broad policy or a policy that addresses one aspect of collection development). The articles that follow, by Karen Burkett and Elizabeth Prevost, exemplify these topic areas and open the door to further contemplation and dialogue.

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Bishop, K. 2007. *The Collection Program in Schools: Concepts, Practices, and Information Sources*. 4th ed. Library and Information Science Text Series. Westport, Conn: Libraries Unlimited. 

The Development of a Selection Policy for the School Library

Karen Burkett

A well-articulated selection policy is an essential tool for any school library. This article provides a rationale for developing a selection policy and discusses the process of writing one.

According to Doiron (2002, 20), "Selection means wise allocation of available funds for maximum impact on student learning. Planning is essential." Bishop (2007, 41) asserts that it is "the media specialist's professional responsibility to ensure that appropriate policies are in place," including a selection policy.

Why Does a School Library Need a Selection Policy?

A school library needs a selection policy for the following reasons:

- To make appropriate choices to support student achievement
- To select valuable materials for the library and justify their inclusion
- To weed materials and justify their removal from the library
- To respond professionally and proactively to challenges to materials

For a school library collection to be valuable, it must meet the needs of its clientele—the students and the staff. Deliberate choices must be made to support both the curriculum and student interest. Greenan (2002, 13) states, "The recognition of the crucial role that the collection plays in the support of the school curriculum [is] the motivating force behind the selection process."

Savard (2007, 87) says,

Librarians and libraries are constantly faced with the challenge of building collections of resources that are of value to students and teachers. When done well, teachers should be able to build lessons and assignments from these collections, with the assurance that the resources they have built their work around will be available to their students.

A selection policy provides guidelines that direct the purchase of these materials. When a selection policy is combined with knowledge of the collection's strengths and weaknesses, the teacher-librarian can make informed choices and can purchase materials that will enhance student learning. In fact, a selection policy is usually an integral component of a school's collection development policy, a document that provides an overall assessment of the collection and long-term plans for its development.

The library collection is not a static entity. As ideas change, so too must the collection. Hence, an important component of the selection policy is the section on deselection. Resources that no longer fit the criteria of the selection policy must be removed from the library. Doiron (2002, 19) states, "As new knowledge is developed in different subject areas, many books need to be removed from the collection because the information they hold is no longer the truth." In fact, misinformation can be more damaging than no information (Baumbach and Miller 2006). The selection policy serves as a reference tool for weeding and provides library staff with justification for removing certain materials.

When a learning resource is challenged, the selection policy plays another important role. As Adams (2008, 28) notes, "A school without a selection policy is vulnerable to complaints about library resources with no guidance on how to proceed and little legal basis for protecting students' . . . rights." Again, the selection policy serves as the reference point and indicates the criteria the resource met when it was originally added to the collection. The policy "communicates the school's support for intellectual freedom" and "opposes censorship in any form, referring to students' rights to receive information" (p 28). It also clearly outlines procedures to follow in order to respectfully address concerns.

However, Adams (2008) cautions that a policy is only as effective as the people in charge. It is important that

the policy be shared with the administration. Better yet, the administration should be involved in developing the policy to ensure that the administrator subscribes to the beliefs inherent in the policy and is informed about the procedures to follow in the case of a challenged resource.

How Do We Create a Meaningful Selection Policy?

We want to create a selection policy that is meaningful, one that won't end up as just another policy in a dusty binder. The teacher-librarian's role is to provide leadership in this area, but it is important to involve staff in the development of the policy.

Many library professionals recommend forming a school library committee (Doiron 2002; Greenan 2002; Savard 2007). Greenan says, "The prime benefit of a collaboratively produced [selection policy] is that the library is no longer seen as the responsibility of one person" (p 14). The more involved teachers are in developing the plan and purchasing resources, the more aware they will be of what the library has to offer. They will also be more likely to use the resources and share their enthusiasm for the library with their students. This leadership also leads to more opportunities for collaborative teaching.

The first step in developing the policy would be to review a variety of selection policies. In *The Collection Program in Schools*, Bishop (2007) outlines the basic components of a selection policy, and provides detailed suggestions for criteria and wording. Another valuable resource, available online, is the *Workbook for Selection Policy Writing*, created by the American Library Association, Office for Intellectual Freedom (nd). Many other examples can be found through an Internet search. In addition, most school divisions have generic policies that guide the selection of instructional resources and materials. After reviewing the policies, the committee members can create a policy that best suits the needs of their school.

Once the policy has been written, it is important to share it with the rest of the staff and with parents. To keep the document alive and well, refer to it regularly when making purchases or weeding materials from the library. In addition, Adams (2008, 28) recommends a "systematic review of all library . . . policies to ensure currency," preferably every three years.

Doiron (2002, 21) summarizes the process succinctly:

Good school library collections don't just happen; they are the result of much hard work that begins with the leadership of the teacher-librarian, the support of an administrator and the collaboration of teacher and parents in the goal of providing students and teachers with the best quality teaching/learning resources available.

A selection policy is essential to an effective library program. Create a policy, share it, use it and review it regularly to maintain a library collection that is valued by all the library's clientele.

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Online Collections Are Essential: Collaborative Development of Online Collections in Elementary School Libraries

Elizabeth Prevost

Students in a Grade 3 class, while researching the solar system, raise questions that aren't answered in the school library's collection of books, periodicals and DVDs. Immediately, they decide to abandon the library and use Google to find the answers. Too young to possess the skills necessary for effectively searching the Internet, the students are quickly overwhelmed by the quantity of irrelevant information, and they subsequently lose all desire to continue seeking answers to their questions. How can teacher-librarians in school libraries help young students avoid this dead end?

School libraries are charged with the responsibility of providing students with access to information from a variety of reliable sources that will help them answer questions and solve problems to foster constructive learning. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and UNESCO (1999) have put forward a school library manifesto, which states,

The school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society. The school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens.

In its position statement on effective school library programs in Canada, the Canadian Library Association (2000) states,

The role and responsibility of the school library lies in the development of resource-based programs that will ensure that all the young people in our schools have the opportunity to learn the skills that will enable them to become competent users of information.

Using information from the Internet is a necessary skill for lifelong learning, and elementary school libraries must assist information-seeking students by including relevant, high-quality online collections among their resources.¹

What is the role of the teacher-librarian in finding and creating online collections? One responsibility of the teacher-librarian, as discussed by Bishop (2007, 5), is to "acquire and evaluate information resources, while working collaboratively with teachers, administrators, and students to make them aware of information issues." The editors of *Achieving Information Literacy* (Asselin, Branch and Oberg 2003, 58) state, "Teacher-librarians use their expertise in selection and collection development to work with other teachers to ensure that appropriate resources are chosen to support the learning outcomes of the curriculum and the learning styles and interests of the students."

Even so, some librarians and teacher-librarians are still undecided as to the role the Internet should play as a resource in the library collection. Scroggins (2006) is not alone in suggesting that most questions are best answered using print resources and the professional assistance of the librarian, claiming that libraries should be a place where intellectual development occurs mainly through reading books. Bishop (2007, 1) argues that while in the past a collection described the resources mainly in print, along with some audiovisual items, advances in information technology have expanded the scope of the collection, taking it beyond the walls of a single room in the school. As Asselin, Branch and Oberg (2003, 58) remind us, "The school library's collection provides access to resources which are housed in the centre as well as various electronic

resources” and teacher-librarians “are also responsible for the identification, evaluation, and access of various electronic resources, including . . . materials on the Internet.”

In order to develop a balanced collection that provides necessary support for resource-based teaching and learning, teacher-librarians must include access to a variety of formats in the collection, including selected Internet sites to meet the diverse needs of learners in an information-based society. When *Achieving Information Literacy* (Asselin, Branch and Oberg 2003) was published six years ago, it was the opinion of its editors that an *exemplary* balanced collection would include catalogued Internet sites (p 30). Today, with the increasing popularity of the Internet as a resource, it can be argued that an *acceptable* balanced collection in an elementary school requires catalogued Internet sites. Developing a quality online collection is the responsibility of the 21st-century elementary teacher-librarian. If this collection is carefully managed and maintained, it will allow the school library to remain the information core of the school.

Using carefully selected Internet resources has many advantages, including those outlined by Bishop (2007, 103): quality educational websites provide access to information on a global basis; information that is generally current; a process that is quick, cheap and efficient; links to connect related sources of information; information presented in a variety of formats; and information that users can interact with at their own pace. Internet sites do not replace the print collection; rather, they enhance the print collection, giving students more options and providing advantages that a print collection cannot offer.

If we are to keep students engaged as learners and researchers using the school library, we must give them access to information from websites. Young Canadians in a Wired World—Phase II (2003–05), a study conducted by ERIN Research and funded by the Government of Canada, looked at the online behaviours, attitudes and opinions of more than 5,200 children and youth in Grades 4–11 (Media Awareness Network 2005). The results show that young Canadians in all provinces and territories are more connected than ever. For example, 94 per cent of young people surveyed said that they go online from home, compared with 79 per cent in 2001 (p 4). When students were asked how they like to get their information for school assignments, the Internet was cited as the main source (over books from the library). Among Grade 4 students, 62 per cent said that they prefer the Internet,

while 38 per cent chose the library (p 7). Compared with Phase I (2000–01) of the same study, these statistics suggest that it is the evolving responsibility of the elementary teacher-librarian to include access to quality Internet sites in order to keep students coming to both the physical and the virtual libraries to seek information.

Heil (2005) states that as part of information literacy, a student must be able to “evaluate Internet resources critically and to decide if each source is unbiased, accurate, and written by a qualified person who has specific knowledge on the topic. This ability is crucial to being a good user of resources and to research.” This is true, but elementary students are only beginning to develop critical-thinking skills and information literacy, and they must rely on adults to help them locate and evaluate resources. For young students, using general search tools on the Internet is ineffective and time-consuming, and even when supervised by an adult, searchers can inadvertently come across material that is developmentally disturbing or even pornographic.

Kuhlthau (2004), based on the results of research on the information search process, suggests that learners experience uncertainty with both physical access and intellectual access to information and, in fact, for learners, the two are intertwined. Kuhlthau found that “uncertainty can be caused by a lack of ability to find needed information or being overwhelmed by the quantity of information” and suggests that accessing information on the Internet may increase student anxiety and uncertainty, because of the sheer quantity of information.

If this is the case, then simplifying the Internet search by providing a constantly evolving online collection may reduce uncertainty, not just with the access to resources but in the information search process as a whole. The Internet, despite its risks and potential dangers, plays a major role in 21st-century information literacy. Although teaching students how to effectively access, evaluate and use information from the Internet must be embedded in the role of the teacher-librarian, a carefully selected collection of websites can allow young researchers to successfully use Internet resources while their critical-thinking skills are still developing.

An accessible online collection can and should replace the use of Internet filters. Filters, which have been widely adopted to protect children from dangers on the Internet, are a form of censorship, not selection, and they challenge a child’s right to intellectual freedom. The IFLA (2002) provides an Internet manifesto whose opening statement proclaims that “unhindered

access to information is essential to freedom, equality, global understanding and peace." Internet filters unquestionably hinder access to information. The IFLA encourages all governments to "support the unhindered flow of Internet accessible information via libraries and information services and to oppose any attempts to censor or inhibit access." The IFLA/ UNESCO (1999) school library manifesto states that "access to services and collections should be based on the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Freedoms and should not be subject to any form of ideological, political or religious censorship, or to commercial pressures." Clearly, the IFLA is against the use of Internet filters. Schrader (2002, 19) suggests that "the unintended consequences of the filtering solution are to diminish debate, to promote oversimplification of ideas and issues, to encourage conformity, compliance, and complacency, and thereby to foster authoritarian attitudes and undermine the practice of citizenship."

Filters have no place in school libraries, but that does not mean that young children should explore the Internet without supervision or guidance. Teacher-librarians trained in selecting, evaluating and organizing resources can create a diverse online collection as part of the library collection, providing students with access to the range of Internet information to which they are entitled, rather than denying them access, which is the case with filters. Students and teachers could contribute sites to the collection, and students could use the collection more efficiently and with less supervision than in searching the Internet at large.

Teachers want students to use the Internet as a resource, but they generally do not have the time to pre-select a variety of quality sites that students would find useful. Perrault (2007), in her study of the online information-seeking behaviours of teachers, found that although teachers require more access to online resources (both for themselves and for students), tension is created by a lack of time, along with uncertainty regarding how to manage and organize the resources. Teacher-librarians can help relieve this tension by taking charge of evaluating and organizing collaboratively selected curriculum-based online resources. This will reassure teachers and parents that children are gaining access to developmentally appropriate, reliable and useful learning resources.

A collaboratively developed online collection—where the teacher-librarian evaluates, organizes and makes accessible websites selected or deemed useful by the learning community—can be a powerful tool,

supplementing the library's existing collection. Collaboration in collection development builds success for teachers and students, and should be employed in developing all aspects of the collection, including the online component. Lance (2002) determined that students' achievement increases when teacher-librarians engage in collaborative relationships with teachers around collection development. Just as with the print collection, teachers need to be involved in developing the online collection if the collection is to be well used. As Doiron (2002, 19) states, "It takes a teacher to be able to find the best learning resource that best facilitates particular learning outcomes. It takes a teacher-librarian to connect the school library collection to the school's instructional program."

Including an online collection as part of the library collection can help the teacher-librarian mediate more effectively with students' information needs. According to Kuhlthau's (2004, 119) levels of mediation in the information search process, the teacher-librarian operates at the highest level, called the counsellor, when "the underlying assumption is that the user is learning from information in a constructive process as the information search proceeds." A sequencing of sources of information is recommended as the individual nature of the topic or problem evolves. The teacher-librarian guides the student toward a depth and format of information based on past experience and the user's previous constructs of knowledge. The depth, format, structure and sequence for learning are tailored to the user. Including online materials in the collection—organized by subject, depth of content, reading level and format—will better enable students in their construction of knowledge by providing access to, and guidance with, a greater variety of tailored learning resources.

As with the print collection, there are many factors to be considered in deciding what should be included in the online collection. A basic online school library collection should consist of selected websites that correlate directly with curriculum strands and topics covered by teachers in the school. Teachers should be able to use the online resources in the same way they use the print resources: to create learning activities and to help students find the information they need. Reliability, depth of content, reading level, format, speed of access, appeal, navigational design, potential for sustainability, and cost (if any) weighed against potential use all need to be considered before a website is selected for inclusion in the collection. The website's curriculum connection, reading level and format

should be included in the access information. Unlike with the print collection, new online resources can be added as needed or as discovered, because cost is seldom a factor.

However, the main issue in developing an online collection is the potential impermanency of resources. While print resources remain in the collection until they are deselected, online resources can be tenuous, with URLs changing or websites disappearing altogether without warning. Students and teachers need ongoing access to the resources, so websites should be selected with their potential for sustainability in mind. A process should be developed for regularly assessing links and for advising the teacher-librarian of broken links so that replacement websites can be found. The teacher-librarian can transform the maze of the Internet into a more direct information quest, by carefully selecting websites for the library collection based on collaboratively determined criteria and by ensuring that those websites are reviewed and replaced as necessary.

The implementation strategy for developing an online collection depends on the existing technology in a school library and the technological competence of the teacher-librarian. The process can be a complex and isolated one, as outlined by Loertscher (2003), where the online collection exists as an intranet, a closed system protected by a firewall. Users enter this intranet with a password and can then build their own information space, where they collect resources from the intranet that are useful to them and use communication networks to interact with their peers and teachers. This type of interface is not without advantages, but the software to run the program is costly. Alternatively, the teacher-librarian can develop an online collection by creating or adding to a library website, where links to collected items are categorized on a selected page. This option is free, but updating is difficult and it lacks the security of a password.

For those without the inclination or funds to research and develop a school-based intranet, or to create and maintain a website, Web 2.0 tools are an excellent option for creating collaboratively developed online collections. Tools such as Delicious social bookmarking (<http://delicious.com>) are free and have the power to transform learning communities into active resource seekers who are organizing and sharing what they find. After signing up for a Delicious account and following the prompts to add two buttons to the browser toolbar, the teacher-librarian can begin selecting, organizing and accessing relevant Internet sites for

the collection. Delicious allows the user to tag (label or keyword) selections with search words for later retrieval. Multiple tags can be assigned to each website for easy access. Tags can relate to subject area, topic, format and grade level. Searchers can then use any or all combinations of the tags, producing results as general as "science" or as specific as "spiders, Grade 2, science." Delicious also includes a spot to add notes for each selected website; reading level and format can be included here.

All of these features are useful, and Delicious is free and easy to use, but the outstanding strength of this bookmarking tool, as suggested by DesRoches (2008), is that it allows for sharing and networking with others. Teachers interested in submitting websites for inclusion in the collection can set up their own Delicious account, to which the teacher-librarian can create an RSS feed to subscribe to tags used by specific users and to be alerted when websites for consideration are chosen. By simply creating and using a standard list of tags, consistent with the subject headings already used in the school library database to avoid confusion and maximize access, teachers and the teacher-librarian can easily create and access an organized online collection. The teacher-librarian can then place a link to the Delicious site on the library or school website, to take the searcher directly to the collection. As DesRoches confirms, the live link will automatically include updates to the bookmarks and can be accessed from any computer. The teacher-librarian can extend the collaboration as desired, perhaps including in the RSS feed other teacher-librarians in the district or even experts in the field of teacher-librarianship. Delicious is a powerful, free tool with tremendous potential for easily developing an online collection for an elementary school library.

To facilitate student achievement using resource-based learning, the library must be stocked with a range of suitable resources. If the library does not supply enough resources to meet learning and teaching needs, then the library will not be deemed a central part of the teaching process (Asselin, Branch and Oberg 2003). Internet resources must be included in the collection, because today's students gravitate to the Internet for information. Also, if we add an online collection to the elementary school library, it is likely that other aspects of the library collection will continue to be used; as the teacher-librarian mediates and intervenes with students using the search process, other resources in the collection are integrated with online resources. An online collection provides Internet

resources selected by a trained teacher-librarian and guided by school and district collection development policies, in collaboration with classroom teachers. As Lance (2002, 33) states, "Library media specialists . . . must embrace technology to be effective. They must ensure that school networks extend the availability of information resources beyond the walls of the [library], throughout the building, and, in the best cases, into students' homes."

A library intranet or a link on the library or school website can connect users to the library's online collection, but Web 2.0 technology includes free social bookmarking tools, such as Delicious, that can be used effectively to collaboratively develop an online collection in the elementary school. Asselin, Branch and Oberg (2003) found that collaboration in collection development between the teacher-librarian and classroom teachers will ensure not only the quality but also the usefulness of the collection. If the teacher-librarian takes a leadership role, collaborating with teachers to develop, manage and maintain a quality online collection to enhance the traditional school library collection, students will be more successful in their search for information and will be able to access high-quality and age-appropriate curriculum-supporting materials at any time from any computer. Developing an online component of the library collection in this way can contribute to verifying the value of school libraries in the information age and extending the importance of the school library into homes.

Note

1. For the purposes of this discussion, *online collection* refers to appropriate Internet resources.

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Reflecting on the *Focus on Inquiry* Model: Phase 2—Retrieving

Cynthia Smyth

What Is Inquiry-Based Learning?

Alberta's *Focus on Inquiry* document (Alberta Learning 2004, 1) defines *inquiry-based learning* as "a process where students are involved in their learning, formulate questions, investigate widely and then build new understandings, meanings and knowledge." It is learning centred on the student, reflecting John Dewey's philosophy that all learning begins with the learner. It is a philosophy that I concur with, that students learn by doing. In inquiry-based learning, students learn to ask questions, to inquire and to actively learn.

Inquiry-based learning involves what Dewey (1956) described as the four primary interests of the learner: investigation, communication, construction and reflection. Through investigation, students find out about the world; through communication, they develop social relationships; through construction, they create and change the world; and through reflection, they gain meaning from the experience. Students need the opportunity to solve challenging problems, to have real-life experiences, to communicate their ideas with others, and to investigate and use a variety of resources to support their knowledge development.

Inquiry-based learning challenges students and gives them the freedom to generate their own questions, to collaborate, to analyze, to create and to communicate what they have learned. Students "need to learn not only how to answer questions, but also how to generate them along with strategies to help them find answers" (Donham et al 2001, vii). With the guidance and support of teachers and teacher-librarians, students become engaged in an environment that is rich with information and technology.

As teacher-librarians, we recognize the need to guide and support students in becoming critical thinkers and in becoming information literate. We can do this by

supporting students in developing skills to determine what their information needs are. Teacher-librarians can also help students find appropriate information and evaluate its usefulness. Teaching our students to be reflective learners—to reflect on what they have learned, what they are missing, and what else they would like to learn or know—supports their learning.

Teacher-librarians are knowledgeable in inquiry-based approaches to learning. Inquiry-based learning requires current, age-appropriate, interesting, attractive and relevant materials in a variety of formats (Donham et al 2001, 60), and teacher-librarians can develop collections that support this. Teacher-librarians have expertise in information organization, acquisition and retrieval to meet the needs of our students either through traditional resources or through the Web.

According to Sweeney (2007), inquiry-based learning involves questioning, seeking answers and constructing new understandings. Implementing a model for inquiry, such as the *Focus on Inquiry* model (Alberta Learning 2004), supports teachers and students as they engage in inquiry-based learning activities in the classroom.

Overview of the *Focus on Inquiry* Model

Alberta's *Focus on Inquiry: A Teacher's Guide to Implementing Inquiry-Based Learning* (Alberta Learning 2004) is a revised version of *Focus on Research: A Guide to Developing Students' Research Skills*, which was published by Alberta Education in 1990. This newer version was developed by Jennifer Branch and Dianne Oberg, of the University of Alberta. The resource gives teachers strategies to use as they work to support student learning and achievement through technology integration and through inquiry-based learning. It focuses on how to build a culture of inquiry and a model for inquiry, makes various connections to the

curriculum, and provides information on planning and implementing various phases of inquiry-based instruction.

Focus on Inquiry encourages schools to provide opportunities for students to develop skills they will need all their lives. Students need to learn how to cope with problems that may not have clear solutions, how to deal with changes and challenges to understanding, and how to shape their search for solutions, now and in the future (p 3). There is more emphasis on information technology and electronic information sources than in the previous document, *Focus on Research*. *Focus on Inquiry* was developed in collaboration with members of the university, teacher-librarians and classroom teachers. It is most relevant to the Alberta context but also applicable in other provinces, where it has been well received (according to teacher-librarians in the University of Alberta's Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program). *Focus on Inquiry* can easily be adapted to achieve curricular goals in many boards within and outside of Alberta.

Although *Focus on Inquiry* notes the value of a qualified teacher-librarian, it suggests that the model can work for schools that do not have this support. It states that it "is intended for teachers working on their own or in teams, with or without the support of a teacher-librarian or other library personnel" (p ix).

Focus on Inquiry is well organized and user-friendly, and it contains relevant and practical material. It is supported by research, which makes it a valuable tool for teachers, teacher-librarians and students.

Chapter 1 discusses research that supports inquiry-based learning. Chapter 2 outlines the inquiry model, examining each phase. A large coloured poster of the model was included with my copy of *Focus on Inquiry* and hangs in my office. (The poster is available from the Learning Resources Centre at www.lrc.learning.gov.ab.ca.) Chapter 3 connects the inquiry model and process to the Alberta curriculum, with relevant examples for K–12. (Teachers and teacher-librarians in other provinces can adapt the information in this chapter to correlate with their provincial curricula.) Chapter 4 outlines the process of designing an inquiry activity, with regard to such tasks as planning, working with others, using strategies that engage students and selecting appropriate resources.

Chapters 5–11, which cover the components of the inquiry model, follow a similar format: an outline of key learnings for students; strategies for building student skills, teaching, assessing, gauging student feelings and reflecting on the process; tips for teachers;

sample activities; questions for reflection; and references. Chapter 5 focuses on reflecting on the process of inquiry. It shares strategies for teaching students how to reflect on their learning and provides examples of activities that support reflection. Chapters 6–11 examine the six phases of the inquiry model (planning, retrieving, processing, creating, sharing and evaluating) and how to teach each phase.

Chapter 12 examines implementation of the model and the issues connected to this process. Chapter 13, the final chapter, discusses the research and theories behind the inquiry model, and includes a bibliography of professional readings and research-based resources.

The appendices provide support for inquiry-based learning, including inventories, reflection pages, planners, evaluations and teaching strategies. Finally, the glossary defines several terms associated with inquiry and inquiry-based learning, which is useful to teachers and students who need clarification.

Phase 2—Retrieving

Phase 2 of the *Focus on Inquiry* model—retrieving—connects teacher-librarians directly to the model. The skills and strategies that apply to this phase require the expertise and strengths of the teacher-librarian. The teacher-librarian can support teachers and students in developing an information-retrieval plan, assist in locating and collecting pertinent resources, support the selection of relevant information, guide the evaluation of information, and review and revise plans for inquiry.

A knowledgeable teacher-librarian can teach students search strategies, such as developing a pathfinder or search plan. Encourage students to start with general works and to look for keywords, search terms and subject headings when accessing print and non-print materials (such as databases) and searching the Online Reference Centre. The teacher-librarian can help students and teachers locate resources in the library, and can guide students in using effective Internet search strategies and accessing appropriate search engines. According to Riedling (2005), one of the main functions of the teacher-librarian is to assist students in the use of the library and its collection. The goal of a reference interview is to determine the "nature, quantity and level of information the student requires as well as the most appropriate format" (p 91). Searching the library effectively requires a good search strategy and the support of a teacher-librarian.

Retrieving information in the library media centre requires an understanding of how information in

libraries is organized. The teacher-librarian is knowledgeable in this area and can provide guidance to both students and teachers, who must learn how to use online catalogues such as WebCat and, in our library, the Sagebrush Accent library system. The teacher-librarian should communicate to students that the search strategies used to access information on the Internet are different from those used for online library catalogues, indexes and databases.

In the retrieval phase, students need the opportunity to record bibliographic information from print and nonprint sources. An experienced teacher-librarian can teach students the correct format and a variety of strategies for recording the information (such as index cards, templates, word-processing programs and software tools).

When retrieving information, students need to learn that different sources provide different kinds of information to benefit student research. For example, letters, diaries, surveys and interviews will provide more personalized information. Students will be more successful during inquiry if the teacher-librarian prepares them well for conducting interviews through having them develop and practise questions and interviewing techniques. The teacher-librarian can demonstrate how to successfully organize and conduct an interview.

In the retrieval phase, as in other phases of the inquiry model, gauging the feelings of students is important. According to Akin (1998), students may experience information overload during this stage. The teacher-librarian needs to be aware of the emotional and physical responses to overload (such as anger, frustration, fatigue, irritability, leg jiggling or swearing) and ensure that students are also able to recognize these signs. Our own experiences with research as teacher-librarians can serve as real-life examples of overload that we can share with students. We should help students identify useful strategies for dealing with overload, such as ignoring or selecting certain categories of information, broadening or narrowing the topic, or simply asking for help. Teaching our students about concept mapping or making decisions about appropriate information for a topic will support them during the retrieval phase when information overload becomes an issue.

The teacher-librarian should also teach students to ask questions when reflecting on the process of retrieval. Students need to critically analyze resources to determine which are the most useful and where they are located. One way to teach critical thinking is to model open-ended thinking. According to Noddings

(2008), "Thinking involves planning, ordering, creating structural outlines, deciding what is important and reflecting on one's own activity." In her article on teaching students to think, Noddings says that teachers should occasionally tackle problems or ideas they have not worked out yet. In this way, they model open-ended thinking and can show students the obstacles they too have to deal with, as well as the successes. By thinking out loud about whether an article is reliable or accurate, the teacher-librarian can demonstrate the issues and important points to consider. As *Focus on Inquiry* states, students should be given opportunities to "understand that the Retrieving phase of the inquiry process is a method of problem solving that requires both critical thinking and imaginative thinking" (p 54).

The editors of *Achieving Information Literacy: Standards for School Library Programs in Canada* (Asselin, Branch and Oberg 2003, 5) assert that

If a school library were to have a teacher-librarian who taught children and youth the skills necessary to be effective users of information in all its forms, a powerful mechanism would be in place for enabling Canadian children and youth to be literate citizens, life-long learners and contributing adults in a learning society.

Libraries play a key role in supporting education through providing resources and services. Robert Martin, director of the Institute for Museum and Library Services, says that

Libraries . . . have an impressive array of strengths to bring to the 21st century learning culture. They are trustworthy resources. They have a long history of free and equitable access and stand as core democratic institutions with the ability to meet the needs of everyone. They are effective knowledge navigators and provide expertise to help people learn. They are skillful teachers of learning skills, and critical thinking skills that are so important in today's world of information overload. They are masters at facilitating inquiry-based learning—the kind of learning that is becoming more vital every day in this new century. (Storey 2003)

Abram (2009, 2) says that we need to put content at the users' fingertips when they need it:

We have a magic moment with every reference transaction to transform our learners for life—for the better! We do this by respecting their real needs, understanding the variety of learning styles, and knowing deeply the literacy skills that we need to endow them with.

He continues,

When you leave the reference desk, you should leave a better person—informed, empowered, and better skilled. Answers are just the beginning in education. It's the process that creates the teachable moments. (p 2)

Final Thoughts


Our students need to learn more than what is written in a textbook. They need to be able to examine complex problems and understand how to effectively solve them. They need to access multiple sources and media to support their understanding and learning. They need to become active learners, and to collaborate and understand other perspectives.

Focus on Inquiry values and supports a more open inquiry-based process of teaching and learning. Students become more willing to question; to use multiple sources and media to find information and answers; to become more actively engaged in their learning; to discuss, collaborate and even debate when necessary; and to reflect on what they have learned. The document takes a quotation from the Galileo Educational Network (nd) that caught my attention: "Inquiry is a dynamic process of being open to wonder and puzzlement and coming to know and understand the world." Student engagement in an inquiry project does enhance their learning.

Inquiry-based learning is a valuable process that supports student success when dealing with a multitude of resources and information. Many of our students can navigate the Internet and use a variety of Web tools, but that does not mean that they are able to make informed decisions about and formulate opinions on what they have read or viewed. We need to collaborate with our students and take an active role in modelling inquiry-based learning through discussions, clarification of expectations and support. Students need to be active participants in their learning, in order to experience success. In inquiry-based learning, according to *Focus on Inquiry*, students are becoming involved in their learning through formulating questions; investigating widely; and using a variety of resources (including technology) to build new understandings, meanings and knowledge in order to answer a question or support a position. All teachers

and teacher-librarians should have a copy of *Focus on Inquiry* as a support for implementing inquiry-based learning in their programs.

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Building a Culture of Inquiry at a BC Elementary School Using Alberta's *Focus on Inquiry*

Val Martineau

When I embarked on my career as a teacher-librarian in May 2007, one of my mentors gave me *Focus on Inquiry* (Alberta Learning 2004), saying that it was essential for starting on the right track. At the time, I was overwhelmed by my new role—adjusting to the shift from being a classroom teacher to being a teacher-librarian, and losing sleep trying to figure out the Workflows computer system. Through May and June, I barely cracked open the document. Fall came and went, with a major flood damaging our library, followed by extensive renovations and no library access for three and a half months. It wasn't until January 2008 that I began using and understanding *Focus on Inquiry* strategies. As I devoured the document's pages, the connection between inquiry-based learning, Web 2.0 tools, and research and critical-thinking skills became clear. I have hardly put it down since.

Focus on Inquiry states that "inquiry-based learning is not an 'add-on,' but rather a way to achieve the goals of the Alberta programs of study, since inquiry-based learning is a component of all Alberta curricula" (p ix). This is also true of the British Columbia curriculum, where critical thinking begins in Grade 3 and cooperative participation in groups begins in kindergarten.¹

Rationale for Choosing *Focus on Inquiry*

Focus on Inquiry offers sound pedagogy that aligns with the goals and objectives of Gabriola Elementary School, on Gabriola Island, BC. The document outlining the school's goals for 2008/09 states, "Our plan is to build a more collaborative community of learners that furthers the success and resiliency of our students." Self-assessment and peer assessment play a significant

role in our school, with students taking ownership of their own learning. Critical-thinking skills, such as inquiry, are important steps in this learning. As *Focus on Inquiry* states,

Without learning an inquiry process, students often develop a very limited and narrow view of inquiry. They may think that inquiry is finding the answer to other people's questions for the satisfaction of their teacher, rather than understanding inquiry as the process of being puzzled about something, generating their own questions and using information to satisfy their own interests and to develop their own knowledge. (p 8)

Another key reason Gabriola is effectively implementing *Focus on Inquiry* is that our staff members believe in this model and are comfortable teaching it. The model allows for flexibility and adaptation for both teachers and students, and it offers solid strategies for teaching information literacy. Asselin, Branch and Oberg (2003) emphasize that

Schools are responsible for teaching children how to adapt to change and how to make decisions and solve problems based on accurate and authentic information. Critical thinking skills are essential to evaluate information and to apply information creatively and responsibly to solve problems.

Collaboration

Gabriola's teachers, parents and students celebrate collaborative teaching. Our principal has had collaborative planning time added into our timetable. During our Monday-morning assemblies, a team is given half an hour to coplan while the other staff members take part in the assembly. Twice a year, our principal brings in teachers-on-call to allow for 90-minute planning

sessions and conversations among grade-group teachers. The teacher-librarian and the learning assistant teacher attend all grade-group sessions.

The teachers value this time together and are more inclined to work collaboratively on inquiry-based units when given sufficient time for planning and discussing strategies. "In co-planning units, two teachers can better address student diversity and support and extend the learning of all students" (Brownlie, Feniak and Schnellert 2006). The teams use coplanning strategies that best suit their needs, including *Focus on Inquiry's* planning cycle for teachers (p 24).

Last year, I was able to collaborate with some teachers on implementing *Focus on Inquiry* strategies into the classroom, while other teachers worked on these strategies in their "buddy teams" for our Network of Performance Based Schools (NPBS) objectives.² The success of these collaborations generated enthusiasm among teachers and significant growth among students, as demonstrated by our NPBS results. This was the beginning of a shift toward a culture of inquiry at our school.

A Common Language

During our spring planning session for the 2008/09 school year, our staff created learning groups to meet monthly for discussion. One area of focus was teaching with a common language throughout the grades. The previous school year, our staff incorporated Gear's (2006) *Reading Power* into our teaching. We noticed that using a common language for K-7 when discussing the powers (connecting, questioning, visualizing, inferring and transforming) generated stronger connections, greater understanding among students and a sense of ease among staff. Discussing concepts cross-grade became much easier and more effective.

In the 2008/09 school year, our staff added *Focus on Inquiry* language to our common-language teachings. A common language "increases effective communication among all inquirers in a school since it gives teachers and students the words to talk about the parts of the process" (p 8). The *Focus on Inquiry* model (p 10) is displayed in our library and referred to often.

The *Focus on Inquiry* common language we are incorporating at Gabriola Elementary School includes the terms *planning, retrieving, processing, creating, sharing, evaluating* and *reflecting*. As with *Reading Power* (Gear 2006), not all grades will achieve all levels. The goal is to introduce each concept or strategy and work on it until students have a clear understanding of the

concept, rather than introducing everything at once. For example, with *Reading Power*, our kindergarten students work only on connections.

Reflection

Reflecting on the process of learning has given Gabriola students a greater opportunity to own their learning, to be responsible and accountable for what they learn and how they choose to learn, and to present their learning. Students are given choices through literature circles, independent research and issue-driven projects. Specific goals and outcomes are discussed with students, rubrics are provided and samples of work are displayed. Ultimately, it is the students who are making choices about the topic, the area of a topic and the best method of finding information.

Figure 1 is based on *Focus on Inquiry's* requirements for building a culture of inquiry (p 2). It indicates Gabriola Elementary School's activity in this regard.

Figure 2 is adapted from the Gabriola Elementary School goals for 2008/09. It outlines Gabriola's learning groups.

Challenges

Building a culture of inquiry takes time and patience, as well as growth among staff and students in understanding its purpose and method.

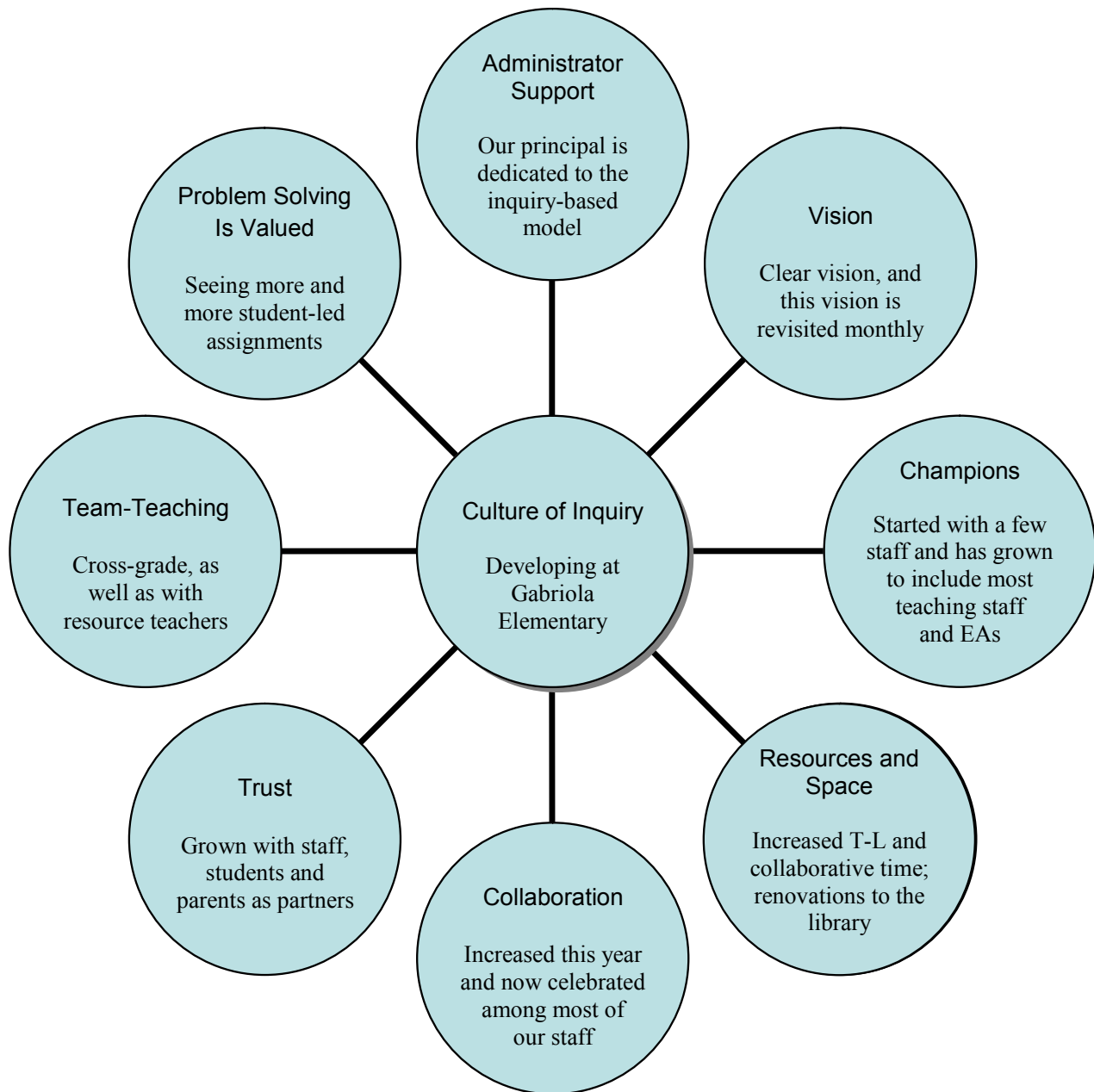
In February, we introduced the EBSCOhost and World Book Online Reference Centre databases. Our vision is to use these databases as key tools for inquiry-based learning. At this time, we are facing challenges in getting the students and some teachers to choose to use these databases over the traditional methods they have used in the past.

Another challenge related to the use of databases and other evaluated Web resources is the need to develop a strong virtual library. Inquiry-based learning is encouraged 24/7, which means that students need access to resources around the clock. As Valenza (2005) says,

If we are going to meet learners' needs with quality resources and if our goal is to graduate learners with twenty-first century information skills, there is no time to waste. The time to build strong virtual libraries is *now*.

When teaching inquiry-based learning, we have found it necessary to guide students through examples

Figure 1
Building a Culture of Inquiry at Gabriola Elementary School

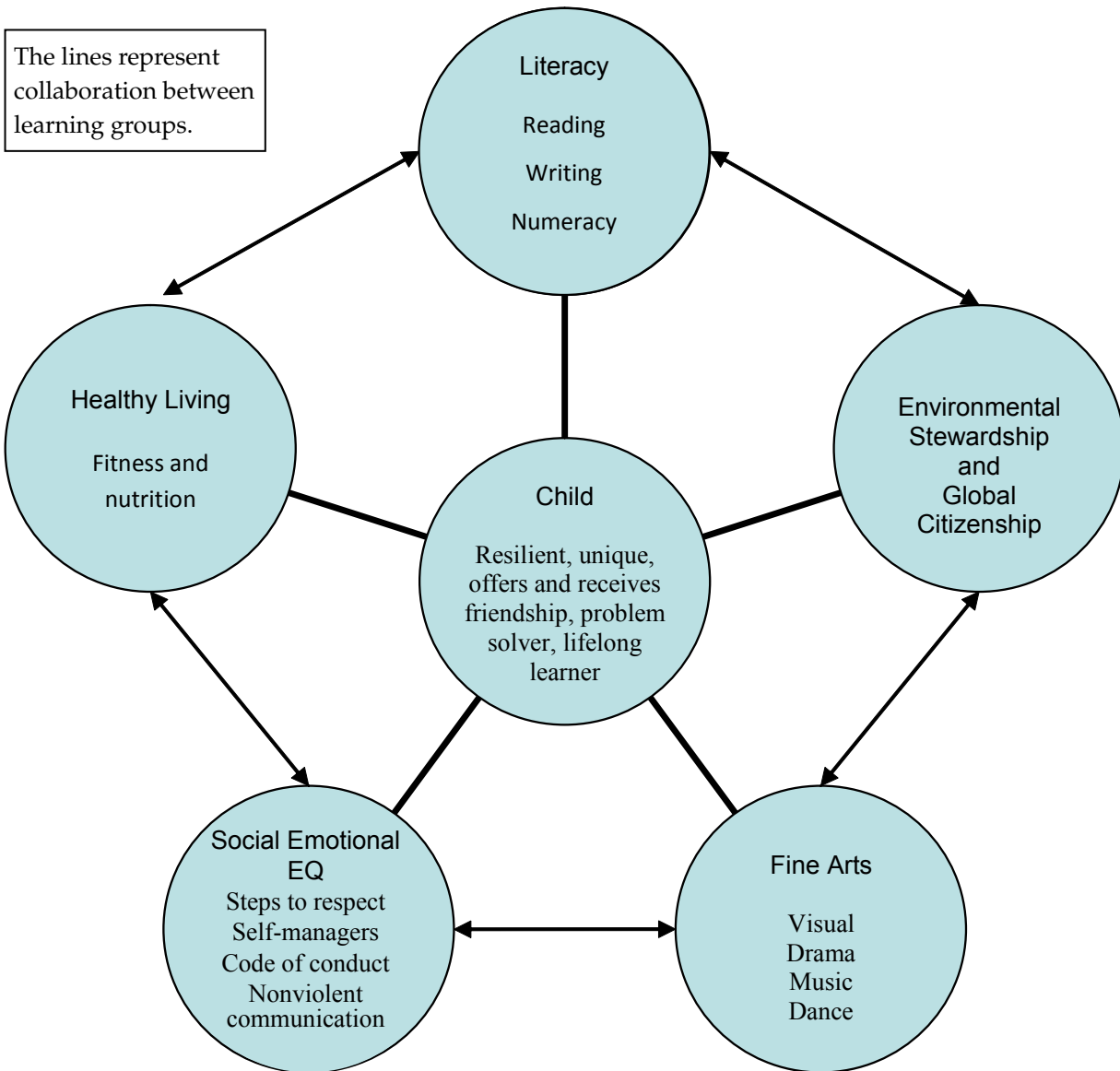


and clear expectations, as many students are accustomed to simply finding the answer and moving on. It is important to give students an opportunity to discuss their understanding of inquiry-based learning—how they see it and how they value it.

Shifting the focus to inquiry opens up great opportunities, but it can also create frustration among students.

Through trial and error, we have learned the importance of keeping a narrow focus on topics when first introducing inquiry-based learning. Too much choice can be confusing to students. Getting students to understand that they will feel confused, frustrated and at times angry during this process is a difficult task, particularly with reluctant students.

Figure 2
Gabriola Elementary School's Learning Groups



The lines represent collaboration between learning groups.

Key Questions:

1. What can we do or what is needed to improve student success and resiliency?
2. How can we do it?
3. How do we know for sure we're making a difference?

Each learning group decides its measure of success.

Our plan is to build a more collaborative community of learners that furthers the success and resiliency of our students.

Summary

Implementing *Focus on Inquiry* has transformed my and other Gabriola staff members' approaches to teaching and teaching styles, and has developed students' critical-thinking skills.


Colleagues are using this model in several aspects of their teaching and throughout the curriculum. As we progress into more collaborative teaching and inquiry-based learning, teachers are becoming more confident in the approach and are more eager to get involved in the process. Under the direction of our principal, we have truly built a culture of inquiry in our school.

Notes

1. For the BC programs of study, go to www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/irp.htm.
2. See www.npbs.ca/sq-multiple.htm.

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Reflections on Implementing *Focus on Inquiry* with High School Students in Saskatchewan

Tracy Woodward

Last year I enrolled in my first course in the University of Alberta's Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning program. That was the dawning of my realization that I had not fully grasped the magnitude of what I did not know. The course was on inquiry-based learning, and it was exciting to learn about the inquiry model through *Focus on Inquiry* (Alberta Learning 2004). I looked forward to my return to the classroom, so I could try a real inquiry-based learning project with students. I had used research projects before, but ignorant of current best practices and research, I had prepared and organized those projects using the same methods I had been taught as a student.

In the fall, I taught a course I had never taught before—Life Transitions 20. The curriculum for this course allows students to “explore issues that are of interest to youth in various communities” (Saskatchewan Education 1996). This was an excellent opportunity for me to implement my first inquiry-based learning unit. I was teaching a small but diverse group of students, and I could combine my role as classroom teacher with my role as teacher-librarian as we worked through the unit. I felt that this experience would give me a good grounding for encouraging other teachers to implement inquiry in their classrooms.

I began by rereading *Focus on Inquiry* and developing a plan. One idea that was difficult to accept into my teaching strategy was that students would be choosing their own topics and the direction of their research, and that I must have a plan in place for them to be successful. In the beginning I had more questions than answers, but I used *Focus on Inquiry* as a guide. Because the document is based on current research, I felt that if I structured my unit around the *Focus on Inquiry* model, perhaps I would be more successful.

Chapter 1 of *Focus on Inquiry* lists the characteristics of a classroom in which inquiry learning is a focus. Included in that list are the use of inquiry based on real-life problems or issues and the use of inquiry that makes the most of students' curiosity (p 4). I felt that this unit, in particular, demonstrated those two characteristics naturally.

When I introduced the project to my students, I used an analogy: for them, this inquiry-based process would be like being given the keys to the car for the first time and being able to drive without an adult with them. I told them that this inquiry process was new to me, as well, and that we would be working through the steps together. I let them know that I might not have all the answers and that we would have to adopt a trial-and-error attitude, as some things might not turn out quite as we had planned. Even though I had spent time planning all of the mini-lessons and putting guidelines into place, I have to admit that I was terrified. I was not at all sure that the whole project would succeed.

I took time to explain the inquiry model to my students, using the diagram from *Focus on Inquiry* (p 10). Knowing that this unit was coming up, I had been incorporating time for current events into the beginning of each class. I brought in news stories, often local, about various topics that might interest students, such as eating disorders and court cases involving youths (for example, bullying cases). Once I had introduced the inquiry project, we formed a circle with our desks and began discussing subjects the students were passionate about, topics that interested them, events that angered them and decisions they wanted to change. We looked at issues at the school, local, national and global levels. This was much more difficult than it sounds, as some students seemed quite apathetic. After two days spent in discussion, I asked my students to go home over the long weekend and

think about a topic they wanted to explore—preferably something they were passionate about, but at least something that interested them.

Chapter 4 of *Focus on Inquiry* maps out a planning cycle (p 24), which I completed step by step. I had some trouble with the fourth and fifth steps in the cycle: determining the scope of the inquiry and the best resources.

In terms of scope, I wanted to give my students a great deal of freedom, but I felt uneasy about not knowing exactly where that would lead. I was also worried that part of my planning contradicted the document I was using as a guide. *Focus on Inquiry* states, “If teaching inquiry-based learning for the first time, limit the scope of the project in terms of time, topic selection and end product. Focus on ensuring success for your students” (p 27). I had determined the end product, but I had not defined the time (other than generally) and certainly had not limited the topic selection. Would I be leading my students into frustration and failure?

As well, I did not know what topics my students would choose, so I had difficulty anticipating what resources would work best. The one thing I did know was that I wanted the students’ research to include primary sources; I wanted them to find someone to interview about the topic and to make some type of local connection. As it turned out, the students were able to access local resource people, and I facilitated this by suggesting people they could contact. They had much success in this area.

Another concern was the students’ level of background knowledge. *Focus on Inquiry* states that teachers should “choose a curriculum-based theme” for which “background knowledge will be developed prior to the inquiry” and to which “students bring a strong background of experience or knowledge” (p 26). Because the students had a wide range of topics from which to choose, I was unsure how to allot time. If some students had a great deal of knowledge and others did not, some would be jumping right in and others would need more time for background reading.

As it turned out, most students chose topics of interest in which they had relatively little background knowledge. One student, an animal lover, was upset over a dog being abandoned at her family’s acreage. She did not know a lot about cruelty to animals, but after arranging tours of and interviews with the local branch of the SPCA and a veterinary clinic, she became well versed in the topic. One group of students was interested in the plight of child soldiers in Sudan, as

one boy’s church was sponsoring a child there. They managed to make contact with a Sudanese man who immigrated to Canada four years ago. He was kind enough to spend an afternoon with them, talking about his experiences, his worries and his plans to help people in his home country. One student who had personal knowledge about abuse did a lot of reading to learn more about abuse nationally and globally.

I felt the most confident when planning to teach the information and communication technology (ICT) skills students would need. After looking at the wide range of skills students could learn, I began to plan a schedule where I would teach mini-lessons at the beginning of class. Unfortunately, the mini-lessons weren’t enough. When I realized that, I began adding more teaching of the skills, but I did not cut back on the number of skills I was trying to cover. In this way, I went against the advice of *Focus on Inquiry*, which says that teachers should “[keep] to a minimum the number of new process skills that are involved in the inquiry. . . . Teach no more than one new skill in [the retrieving, processing and creating] phases of an inquiry project” (p 75). I am not sure why I chose not to follow this advice, but it was certainly a mistake.

Reflection is a practice I have always employed in my teaching, even before I knew that I should. It is an integral part of the inquiry model. As an English teacher, I had been using reflection activities with students for some time, but I had never used them in a research project. I was thankful for the inclusion of what I consider to be one of the most important chapters of *Focus on Inquiry*—Chapter 5, “How Do I Teach Reflecting on the Process?” This chapter not only discusses the various aspects of reflection but also acknowledges the affective stages of the process. My students found it reassuring to know that their feelings were normal, and I was quite surprised at just how accurately and insightfully *Focus on Inquiry* outlines the thoughts and feelings associated with each phase of the inquiry process—both for my students and for me.

That is not to say that we did not struggle with reflection. I made it a practice to stop students a few minutes before class ended for a brief discussion and to allow them to write in their reflection logs. Looking at the logs, I found that the boys tended to write one or two brief and often vague sentences. The girls seemed to have less difficulty with their entries, although it was clear that some were less than enthusiastic about the task, viewing it as merely a hoop through which they had to jump. It was a real battle to keep the reflection logs going and to persuade students to expand on their

first, brief thoughts and to share with more detail. In the end, I would say I had limited success here, despite trying to appeal to students' logic and explaining why this step is necessary. One suggestion made in *Focus on Inquiry* is to have students use a graph to track their feelings during the various phases of the project (p 43). In hindsight, I think I would have had better luck with that reflection activity.

Because this was my first time using the inquiry process, I did not create many documents, instead using those provided in the appendices of *Focus on Inquiry*. I used the learning and strengths inventories (pp 94–95) with my students, and I was surprised at how much difficulty students had finding 10 positive words to describe themselves. I also used the Know Myself Inventory (p 97), although the students had to complete that assessment twice because they did not put much thought into it the first time and were quite flippant in their answers.

What was really new for me as we got into the project, however, was actually having students prepare a plan. I had never used this method before, and neither had my students. There was some grumbling, but I had the students talk about their plans in small groups, and then we shared some ideas as a large group. These discussions proved to be very useful as students gave each other ideas.

Retrieving information was one area where I had planned to include the development of ICT skills. I particularly wanted to address my students' first impulse to use the Internet for research. I wanted to find a way to get them to actually read, and I wanted them to interview a person—whether online or in person. The students needed to develop more background knowledge, so I tried to implement some reading classes. This was not successful. Most of my students would read only for about 20 minutes, and I am not even sure that they were all really reading all that time. We all felt a lot of frustration. I felt that my students were reverting back to their usual habits, and I had an unrealistic expectation that they would all start reading books and reading online instead of just skimming. The students were frustrated by my attempts to force them to read when they just wanted to get on with finding the information they wanted. They had the added frustration of trying to find the right person to interview. Everyone did complete the assignment, but for some it was a long and difficult process.

I did not spend a lot of time teaching the processing phase. I offered students some note-taking graphic organizers and note cards for taking notes. Because

they had developed a list of questions, I hoped that they would be able to more easily determine the information they needed. In the planning phase, I spent time with each group, reviewing their questions and redirecting them when necessary. I also had them work with a partner to talk about their projects and to come up with more questions about the topics.

During the creating phase, I drew assistance from two learning support facilitators from the division office. They each came to the school to spend a class with my students, introducing them to some software. One facilitator worked with the students who wanted to make movies about their projects; the other worked with those who preferred instead to use Photo Story software. The facilitators returned to the school on the first day students were using the programs, to do troubleshooting, and then came back one more time, in the editing stage. We found that the students, even those who had no previous experience with the technology, either learned on their own or were able to help each other. In hindsight, this was a rather big undertaking. Making movies requires much instruction in the use of lighting and camera angles and in filming scenes. I should have stayed with the simpler Photo Story software, especially as the project scope was so large.

Then it was time for the students to share their projects. We did in-class sharing first. Students shared their work with their classmates and talked about what they had learned, what had surprised them and what they would do differently (which incorporated the evaluation phase of inquiry, as well). We had many interesting discussions. We also looked at each project and asked ourselves, *Who else should see this?* The students then shared their projects a second time. Some shared with a class at the elementary school. Some shared with classes in other subject areas, such as history or law, in our own school. One girl's project was extremely personal and powerful, dealing with her life as a foster child and as a witness to addiction and spousal abuse. She agreed to share her work at a film festival.

To evaluate students' work, I kept checklists throughout, and students kept their reflection logs. As well, students entered their initial thoughts on a KWL chart (what we *know*, what we *want* to know and what we *learned*), and I had them return to their charts at the end of the project to complete them. A great deal of group discussion occurred throughout the process, and all of us were involved in evaluating students' final projects.

In reflecting on this inquiry unit, I feel that I should have followed *Focus on Inquiry* more closely in the area of teaching new process skills. The document states that teachers should “[keep] to a minimum the number of new process skills that are involved in the inquiry” (p 75). I attempted to teach more than one skill in the retrieval phase, and I was overconfident in believing that I knew what my students needed. I should have completed the diagnostics, as the document suggests. I glossed over some skills I should have spent more time on, I spent a lot of time on others and I tried to introduce too much in the retrieval phase. Because of this, my students did not gain as much expertise as they should have in these areas.


I am now undertaking my second inquiry project. This time around, I feel I have planned better. I have downsized and put limitations on the project, while still giving students enough freedom to choose topics of importance to them.

With this second project, I am also paying more attention to time. The first project took an immense amount of time. I do not regret allowing students that time to learn skills and develop knowledge they will use all their lives. Nevertheless, my lack of planning around deadlines and my attempts to provide mini-lessons before the mastery lessons made the project drag on too long for many of the students, resulting in a lot of wasted time for some. I now have a better understanding of how to spread the project out over time, allowing enough, but not too much, time for students to complete each phase. Essentially, I feel like I now know what inquiry looks like; I did not really have a grasp of that when I started.

Focus on Inquiry is a worthy handbook for anyone venturing into the area of inquiry. Its design makes it easy to read and follow, and the practical guidelines help teachers make sense of exactly what is required in each phase of the process. As the document states, “The Inquiry Model is based on more than 30 years of research from around the world, with thousands of children, adolescents and adults in a variety of inquiry settings” (p 9). Knowing that the document is grounded in this type of research gave me the confidence to use it, but I still made mistakes because I did not follow it closely enough. One of the model’s greatest strengths is its continual focus on reflection and the affective aspect of research. My students struggled with reflection, probably because in the past they had not been asked to think about their learning. It is critical that we maintain this focus when working with students and when conducting research.

My first inquiry project was a learning experience, and although I was pleased with the deep learning that occurred for some students, I feel that I learned even more.

References

- Alberta Learning. 2004. *Focus on Inquiry: A Teacher’s Guide to Implementing Inquiry-Based Learning*. Edmonton, Alta: Alberta Learning. Also available at <http://education.alberta.ca/media/313361/focusoninquiry.pdf> (accessed October 1, 2009).
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Reflections on Kuhlthau's "From Information to Meaning: Confronting Challenges of the Twenty-First Century"

Arlis Folkerts

Kuhlthau's information search process (ISP) model, which is based on two decades of empirical research, outlines six stages in the process of information seeking: initiation, selection, exploration, formulation, collection and presentation. The model identifies three realms of experience common to each stage: the affective (feelings), the cognitive (thoughts) and the physical (actions). Central to the ISP is the notion that uncertainty, both affective and cognitive, increases and decreases during the process of information seeking. In a recent article, "From Information to Meaning: Confronting Challenges of the Twenty-First Century," Kuhlthau (2008, 67) writes,

An important finding in this research was the discovery of a sharp increase in uncertainty and decrease in confidence after a search had been initiated. A person "in the dip" commonly experienced uncertainty, confusion and even some anxiety until a focus or a personal perspective had been formed. How does this research infiltrate our teaching and learning? Reflection gives us student voice, information about what students are saying in relation to their learning.

It is fairly easy to have students do research that involves answering questions and locating facts in isolation. But so what? In constructivist classrooms, how can we holistically provide an inquiry framework in which students feel supported as they experience confusion, uncertainty and disappointment, and then progress toward feeling a sense of direction, clarity and accomplishment?

A foundational premise for application in our classrooms and libraries is that teachers must use information seeking and the inquiry process in meaningful and

authentic ways. We need to ask how information is being used and for what purpose, and how it will help that individual child.

Kuhlthau's ISP model is seen by some as a linear model. Kuhlthau (2008, 67) argues that "it is a sequential model rather than a linear model. The ISP is experienced as a sequence of one thing after another in a period of time." My view is that the ISP reflects cyclical thinking and processes. Figure 1 illustrates the connections and interplay between information behaviours, information impact and information literacy.

Teachers should be purposeful in teaching students strategies for expressing and enhancing their feelings when engaged in inquiry-based learning. Involving students in their own learning by developing their metacognitive skills (thinking about their thinking) and their ability to think about their feelings enables them to process and monitor their inquiry learning (Alberta Learning 2004, 41). Reflection draws from both the affective and the cognitive domains. Together, they create a climate for student metacognition (p 76).

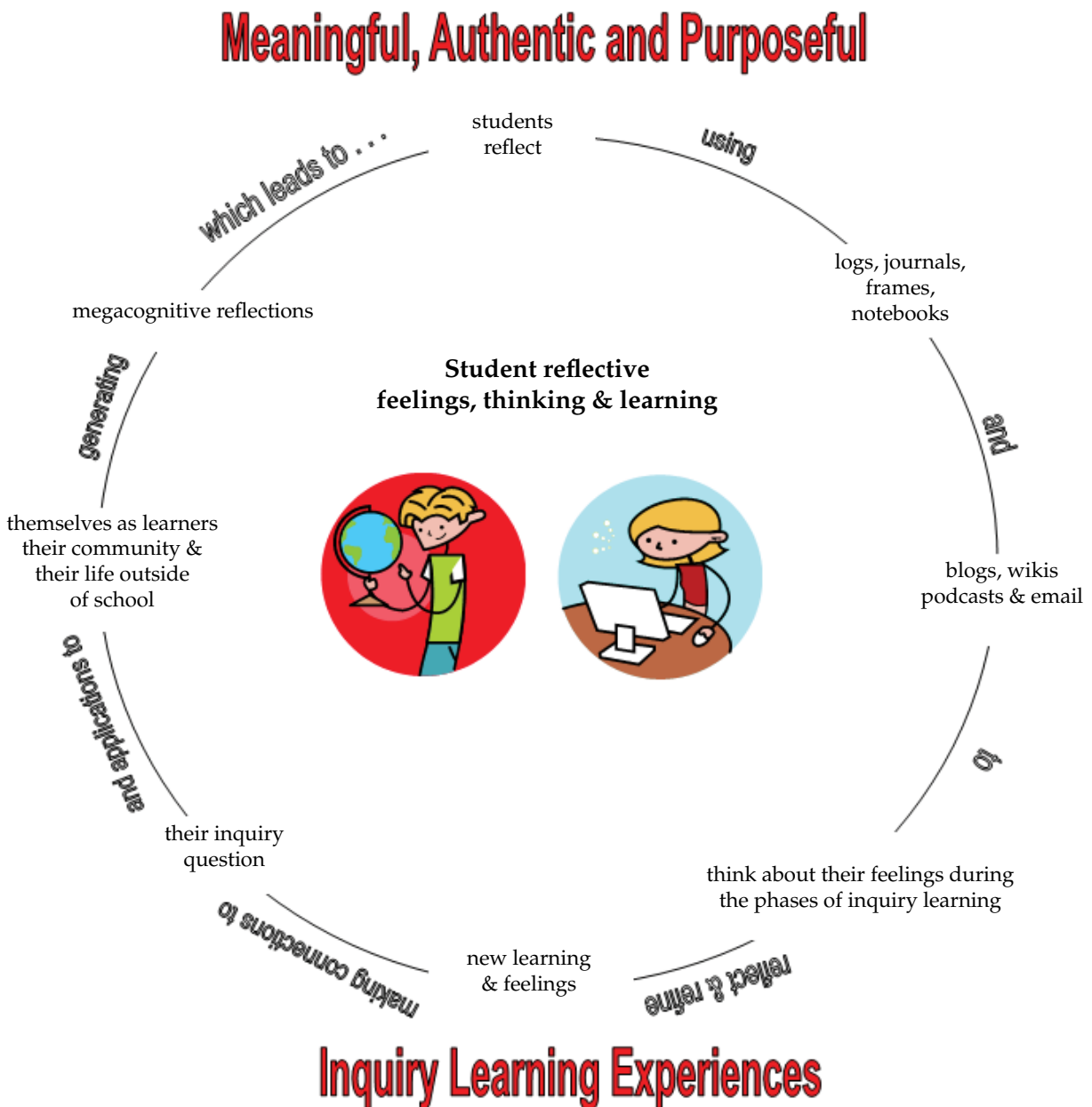
Emotions and social interactions are embedded in the inquiry process; they have a significant effect on a student's ability to focus and learn. Reflection is a strategy for integrating information behaviours, impact and literacy within the context of inquiry learning. As students deal with the affective, or emotional, learning system, reflection becomes reflection-in-action to drive and support inquiry learning. Reflection is not an isolated activity but, rather, a dynamic, repetitive, recursive and holistic process within inquiry learning.

Explicit teaching of both the cognitive and the affective domains within inquiry-based learning supports students as they become information fluent

and intuitively progress through the phases of inquiry and the feelings associated with each. Harada and Yoshina (2006, 20) note that “the shift from teaching focus to learning focus is a crucial one.” Similar to driving a car after a one-year break, proficient users of information need only minutes to refamiliarize themselves with the skills needed.

As students develop their metacognitive and information-processing skills, teachers can support them by providing strategies to help them understand and process the thoughts and feelings associated with each phase of the inquiry. Providing processing frames for students as they work with information to make meaning will support them through the ISP. (For

Figure 1
Meaningful, Authentic and Purposeful Inquiry Learning Experiences



examples of processing frames, see the appendices to this article.)

In information seeking and retrieval, the knowledge and understanding students construct through authentic reflection will enhance their ability to monitor, think deeply, and consider the next steps or further questions in their inquiry. Teacher-librarians are positioned to guide students in their information quests to meaningfully apply personal learning to their world:

The most important aspect of the ISP model is the insight it provides library media specialists for guiding students in reflecting and thinking as they use information for learning. The unique component of the model is its emphasis on the complex task of thinking and forming one's own ideas within the search process. (Shannon 2002, 22)

Continuous reflection and self-awareness are core to inquiry learning. As Kuhlthau (2008, 71) notes,

"Studies show that the impact of information for learning, creating and innovating in the context of daily life constitutes information literacy."

References

Alberta Learning. 2004. *Focus on Inquiry: A Teacher's Guide to Implementing Inquiry-Based Learning*. Edmonton, Alta: Alberta Learning. Also available at <http://education.alberta.ca/media/313361/focusoninquiry.pdf> (accessed October 5, 2009).

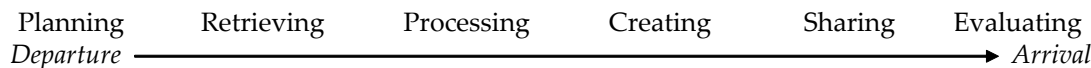
Harada, V H, and J M Yoshina. 2006. "Assessing Learning: The Missing Piece in Instruction?" *School Library Media Activities Monthly* 22, no 7 (March): 20-23.

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Shannon, D. 2002. "Kuhlthau's Information Search Process." *School Library Media Activities Monthly* 19, no 2 (October): 19-24.

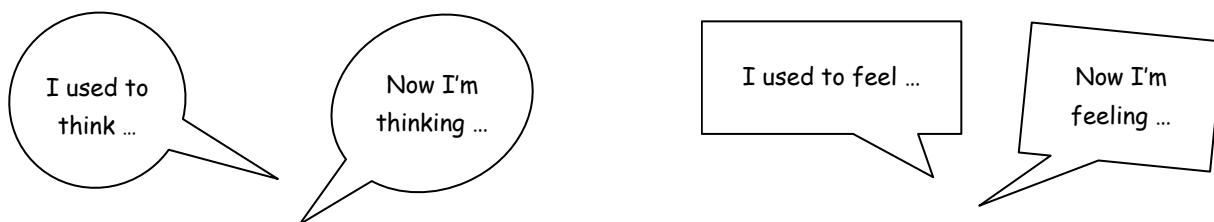
Appendix A: Landmarks on the Journey of Learning

Circle the nearest landmark:



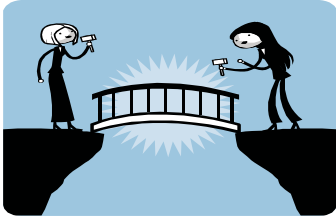
You are on your way. The journey has begun!

Where are you on the trip right now?



Thinking	Feeling
<p>Do one of the following to reflect your thinking at this point in the journey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a picture. • Develop a list. • Write a journal entry or paragraph. • Create and complete a graphic organizer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Venn diagram ○ Three-point approach ○ Word map ○ Web 	<p>Do one of the following to reflect your feelings now:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a picture. • Develop a list. • Write a journal entry or paragraph. • Create and complete a graphic organizer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Venn diagram ○ Three-point approach ○ Word map ○ Web

Appendix B: Building Bridges of Inquiry



Where are you now? Where will you go next?

The Phases of Inquiry

- Planning
- Retrieving
- Processing
- Creating
- Sharing
- Evaluating

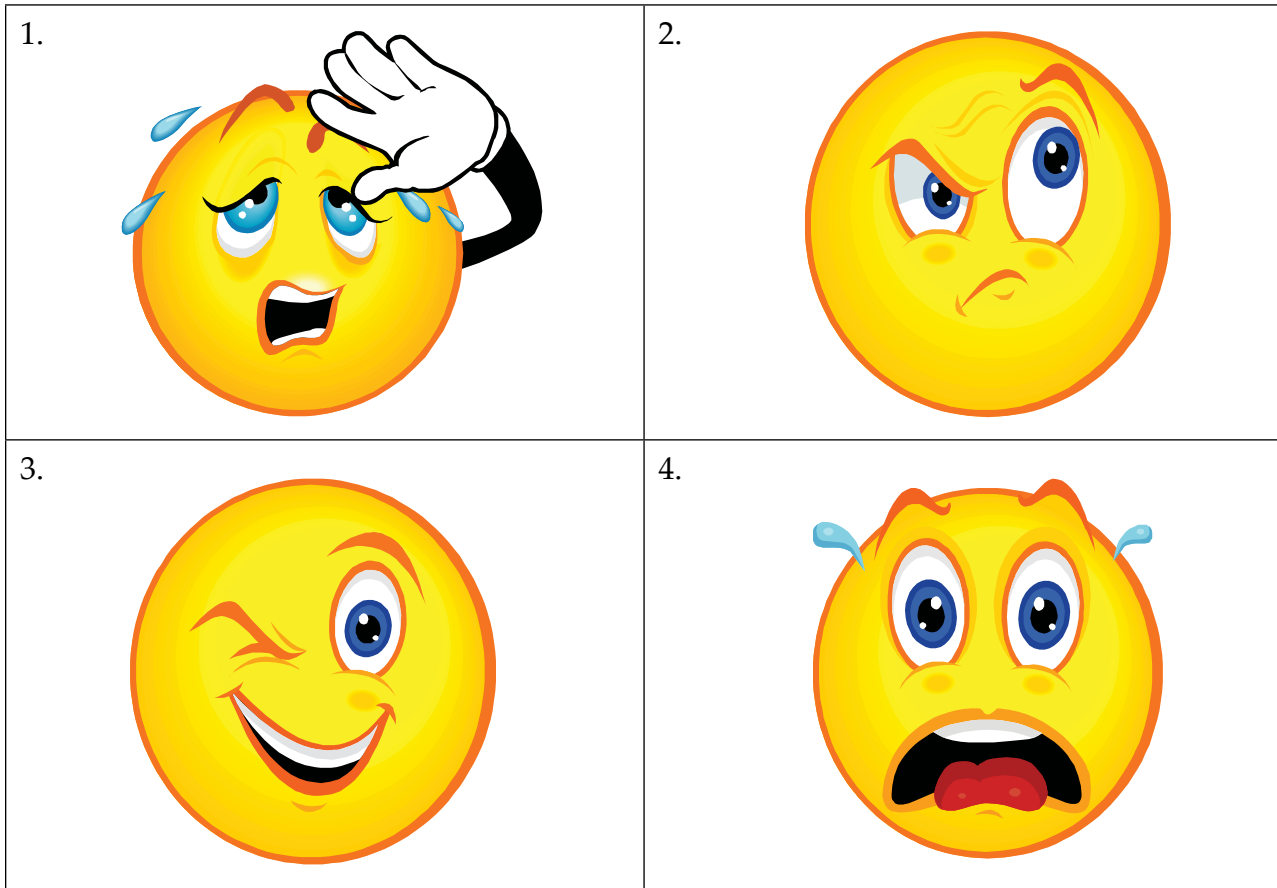
Feelings

- Uncertainty
- Optimism
- Confusion, frustration, doubt
- Clarity
- Sense of direction, confidence
- Satisfaction or disappointment
- Sense of accomplishment

Reflecting on My Feelings

Appendix C: Pic Reflection

Planning → Retrieving → Processing → Creating → Sharing → Evaluating



Reflect on and connect your feelings to what is happening in your inquiry.

How will you feel in the next stage of inquiry?

Update on Alberta Education's School Library Services Initiative

Judith Sykes

Alberta Education has established an initiative that focuses on reviewing K-12 school library services and support resources.

The initiative has established an external School Library Advisory Committee consisting of representatives from the following stakeholder groups:

- College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS)
- Alberta School Library Council (ASLC)
- Educational Technology Council (ETC)
- Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA)
- Association of School Business Officials of Alberta (ASBOA)
- Library Association of Alberta (LAA)
- Alberta Library Trustees Association (ALTA)
- Alberta Association of Library Technicians (AALT)
- Alberta School Councils' Association (ASCA)
- Alberta's regional library systems
- University of Alberta
- Teacher-librarians

The initiative has also established an interbranch committee that includes the Public Library Services branch of Alberta Municipal Affairs, the Online Reference Centre, and Alberta Advanced Education and Technology.

To date, the committees have reviewed the following:


- *Achieving Information Literacy: Standards for School Library Programs in Canada* (Canadian School Library Association and the Association for

Teacher-Librarianship in Canada, 2003) and other research in the area of school library services

- Research relating to school library collaboration with public and academic libraries
- A copy of a draft research paper, "Exploring Seamless Access to Alberta Library Services," which was prepared to inform the committees
- Guiding principles and draft standards for school library services
- A draft school library baseline survey

The School Library Inventory Survey was sent to school principals in June. Results will be shared with the committees and jurisdictions during this school year to inform the work of reviewing and developing support resources.

Current and Future Work

- Ongoing revision of standards, with the final draft anticipated in fall 2009
- Exploration of economy of scale for digital licensing of resources with Alberta Municipal Affairs and Alberta Advanced Education and Technology
- Review and development of support resources for schools based on revised standards and survey analysis: student learning models, innovative models for school library services across the province, and innovative inservice models to build capacity for revised standards 

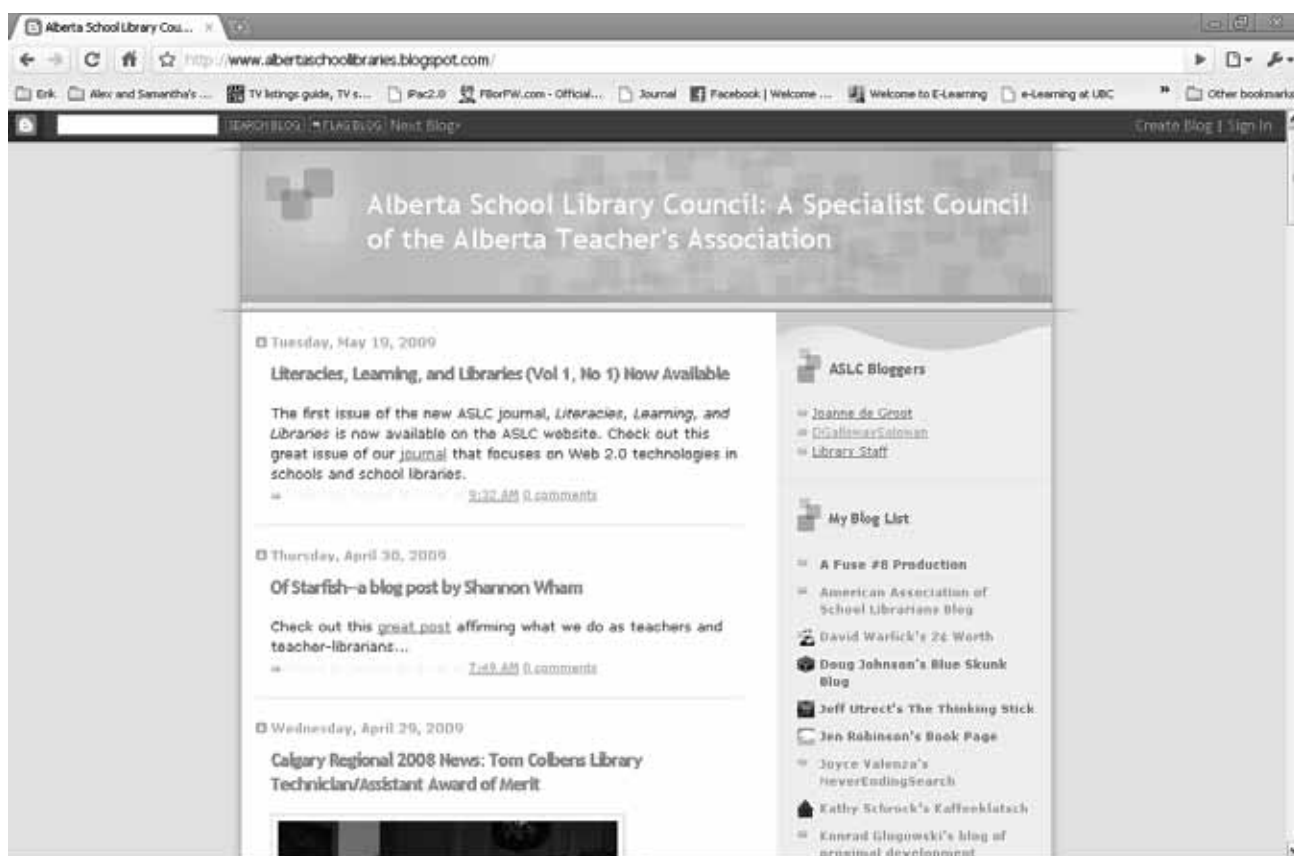
ASLC and Web 2.0: A Great New Partnership

Joanne de Groot

In an effort to enhance communication and collaboration between ASLC members, the ASLC executive recently launched a number of interactive Web 2.0 tools. The phrase *Web 2.0* refers to readily available Web-based tools that are used to communicate and collaborate with others—such as blogs, wikis, photo- and video-sharing sites, and social networking sites (for example, Facebook and MySpace).

Because more educators are beginning to integrate these tools into their programs, the ASLC executive felt that it was important to model their potential and use for members. As Solomon and Schrum (2007, 3) state,

To be a truly new school, it has to model new ways of teaching and learning, and of using new tools. It has to have at its core an interest in helping its students to be successful in the 21st century—in work and in play, and in all other aspects of living in a world that promises only change as the norm.



The ASLC blog (www.albertaschoollibraries.blogspot.com)

Professionally Speaking

I encourage you to participate in these online communities and model for your colleagues and students the benefits of being part of the Read/Write Web.

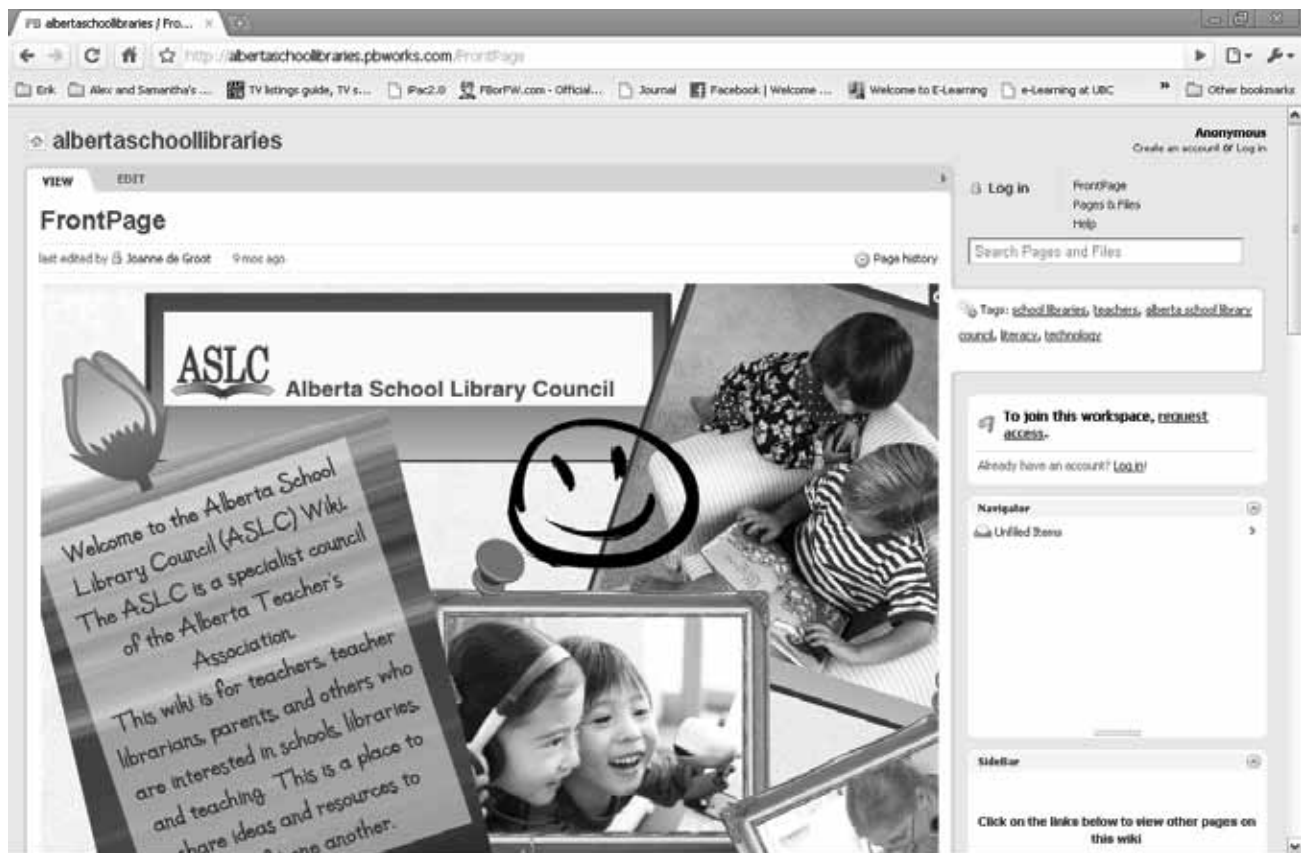
The ASLC website (<http://aslc.teachers.ab.ca>) remains intact, but the information on the website is relatively static and provides only an introduction to the ASLC and its goals and mission. For up-to-date information about upcoming events (including conferences), or for links to interesting information about teacher-librarianship and education in general, please visit our blog at www.albertaschoollibraries.blogspot.com. You can add the blog to your favourite RSS reader (such as Bloglines or Google Reader), which will subscribe you to the blog so that you can receive all the latest news.

Two other online collaboration sites have been created for the ASLC community. These sites will be successful only if you, our members and readers, log in and participate in the conversations. So please join us on the ASLC wiki (<http://albertaschoollibraries.pbworks.com>) and the ASLC Ning network (<http://albertaschoollibraries.ning.com>).

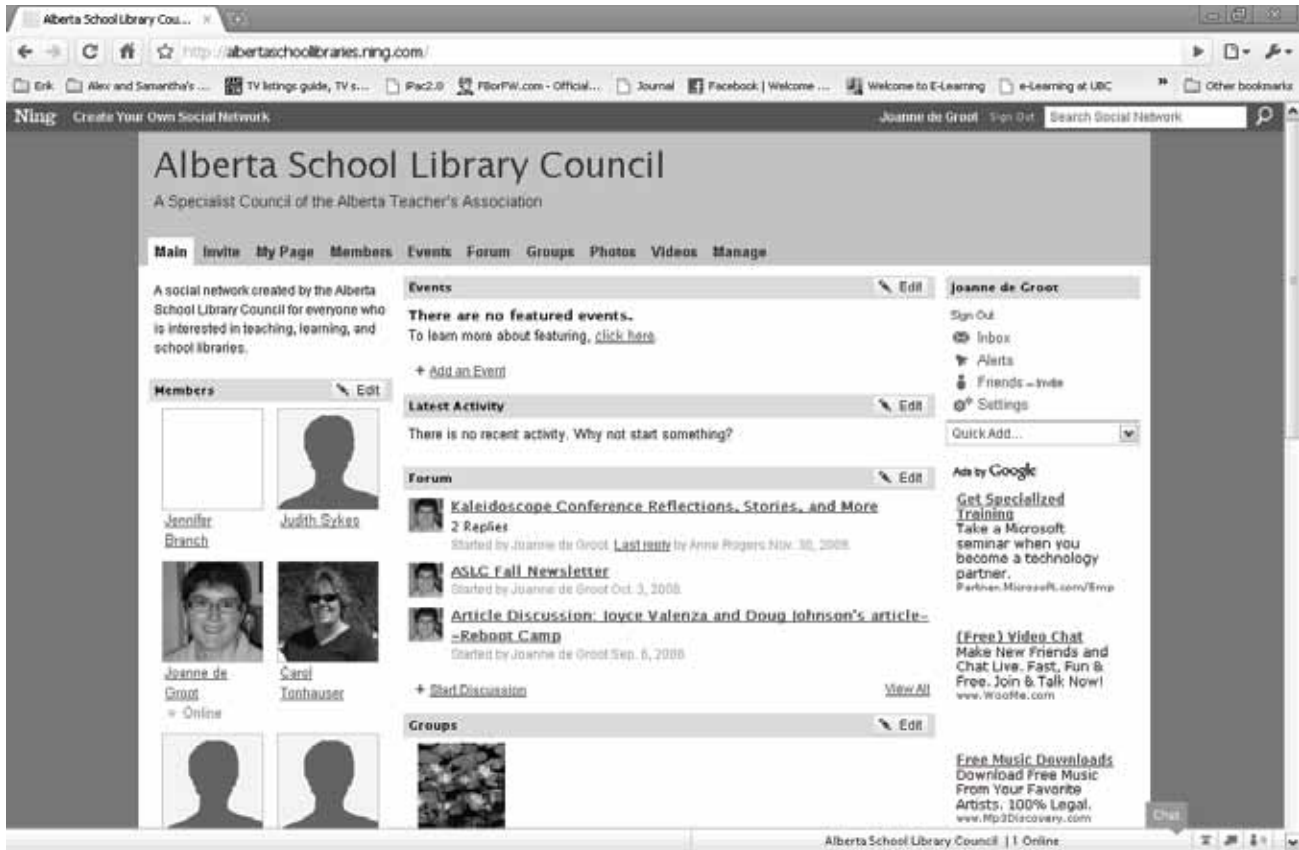
A wiki is an easily editable website that encourages collaboration between members. It is hoped that over time the ASLC wiki will become a significant source of information for teacher-librarians in Alberta. For example, the wiki could be the place to share book lists, curriculum resources or favourite websites.

A Ning is a social network for a specific group of people. The ASLC Ning network allows members of the council to share ideas, ask questions, collaborate, and make personal and professional connections.

Both the wiki and the Ning network are closed spaces, and you must request access in order to participate. If you would like access to one or both of these sites, please e-mail me at degroot@ualberta.ca.




The ASLC wiki (<http://albertaschoollibraries.pbworks.com>)



The ASLC Ning network (<http://albertaschoollibraries.ning.com>)

I look forward to seeing all ASLC members online, and I hope that these new Web 2.0 tools are positive and productive vehicles for our members to network with one another and share information and ideas. If you have any questions about the ASLC website, blog, Ning network or wiki, please contact me.

Reference

Solomon, G, and L Schrum. 2007. *Web 2.0: New Tools, New Schools*. Washington, DC: International Society for Technology in Education 

2009 AGM Minutes

Lynda Smith

The following are the minutes of the ASLC's 2009 annual general meeting, held March 12 at the Distributed Learning Symposium, in Calgary.

- The meeting was called to order at 4:15 PM.
- It was moved by Diane GallowaySolowan, and seconded by Jill Usher, to accept the agenda as submitted. Carried.
- Greetings and opening remarks: Fern Reirson welcomed those attending.
- Fern Reirson introduced the 2008/09 executive.
- The minutes of the April 19, 2008, annual general meeting were reviewed.
- It was moved by Donna Grove, and seconded by Irene Masciuch, to approve the minutes as presented. Carried.

Reports

President's Report

Provided by Fern Reirson, as written

- In addition, Alberta's minister of education acknowledged National School Library Day (NSLD). It's recommended that the ASLC consider forming a subcommittee to look at an NSLD initiative.
- Membership has slightly declined; however, funding has improved.

Past President's Report

Provided by Irene Masciuch, as written

- In addition, coalition work has not been moving forward. A major revision of the ASLC handbook is under way, to realign it with ATA standards.

Treasurer's Report

Provided by Donna Grove, as written

- It was moved by Donna Grove, and seconded by Diane GallowaySolowan, to approve the 2009/10 budget as submitted. Carried.

President-Elect's Report

Provided by Betty-Lou Ayers, as written

- The northern part of the province is seeing an increase in teacher-librarian positions.

PEC Liaison's Report

Presented by Greg Jeffery

- Motion 503, to abolish Grade 3 provincial achievement tests, would be debated the following Monday at the legislature. ASLC members were encouraged to speak up in support of this motion.
- Regarding the debate over the removal of the print version of the *ATA News*, discussion would be coming up again in May at ARA. On the ATA website was a link to a survey, and members were encouraged to provide feedback until March 16.
- An ad hoc committee is being put in place to look at the finances of all subgroups of the ATA.
- Regarding IP4 (individualized provincial personalized program plan) forms, students involved in distance learning may have to have one. The ATA is monitoring the situation; members were encouraged to share any information they may have.

ATA Staff Advisor's Report

Provided by Lyle Krause

Publications Editor's Report

Provided by Diane GallowaySolowan, as written

- The ASLC journal name has been changed to *Literacies, Learning & Libraries*. A motion passed at the executive meeting the previous night to make the journal available on the ASLC website.

Alberta Education

Representative's Report

Provided by Judith Sykes, as written

University of Alberta Representative's Report

Jennifer Branch (absent)

- Fern reminded members about the teacher-librarianship courses available at the University of Alberta.

Conference Chair's Report

Presented by Donna Grove

- Regarding the 2009 ADETA/ASLC/ETC symposium, 650 delegates attended this first joint conference to be held by Alberta Education and the ATA.
- Donna acknowledged Pat Doyle, of the Educational Technology Council (ETC), for his work over the past two years on our behalf. She also recognized Jacquie Skytt, J-C Couture and Lyle Krause, of the ATA, for their work to ensure that this partnership could take place.

Regional Reports

Southeast

Provided by Rhonda Hunter

- There are five teacher-librarians in the area; mentorship programs are being established, with support from the division.

Calgary

Provided by Jacquie Vincent

- Highlighted events included the Kaleidoscope conference in November 2008, the teachers' convention breakfast, and the upcoming AGM and awards/retirement banquet.

Greater Edmonton

Provided by Jill Usher

- Most PD opportunities came from conferences; many members were able to attend at least one conference.
- The regional held a December meeting to provide feedback and representation on an ad hoc committee regarding questions for Judith Sykes, at Alberta Education.
- A PD session to be held in conjunction with the regional AGM is being proposed.
- Members are actively mentoring new and potential teacher-librarians.

Northwest

Paula Anderson (absent)

Election of Officers

Fern Reirson

Slate of Officers

- President: Betty-Lou Ayers
- Conference 2010 chair: Mariaan Camp (agreed to following the meeting)
- Publications chair: Diane GallowaySolowan
- Treasurer: Donna Grove
- Secretary: Janice Sundar
- Past president: Fern Reirson
- It was moved by Jacquie Vincent, and seconded by Jill Usher, to accept the slate as amended. Carried unanimously.

Awards

- The Lawrence G Wiedrick Award of Merit was presented by Irene Masciuch to Rhonda Hunter for her exemplary work as a teacher-librarian, leader and advocate for school libraries.
- The ASLC Award of Merit was presented by Donna Grove to Lyle Krause, ATA staff advisor, for his outstanding contributions to the ASLC.

New Business

Changes to the ASLC Constitution

- Irene highlighted key changes to the constitution, including the makeup of the table officers committee and the conference directors section. All sections have been brought into alignment with current ATA policy and guidelines.
- It was moved by Lyle Krause, and seconded by Jacquie Vincent, to accept the changes to the ASLC constitution. Carried.

Regional Amalgamation

- Fern reviewed the change to the north/south regional structure. The president will be elected; additional members and the organizational structure can be determined by the regional.
- South Regional: cochairs—Anne Rogers and Jacquie Vincent
- North Regional: cochairs—Todd Bekolay (proposed) and TBA

ATA Beginning Teachers' Conferences

- Fern encouraged members to present at both the north and south conferences.
- Pat Ropchan, of Strathcona-Tweedsmuir School in Calgary, offered to do a presentation for the conference in Calgary; Fern Reirson and Jill Usher offered to present at the conference in Edmonton.

LAA/ASLC Conference

- The Alberta Library Conference is to be held April 29 to May 2, 2010.
- The ASLC chair position was filled after the AGM. Mariaan Camp has agreed to be the chair.
- We should consider holding all school library sessions on the same day, to make attendance more affordable for our members.

CASL-PAC Advocacy Representative

- Irene Masciuch will be carrying on the work of the advocacy representative on the Provincial Associations Council (PAC) of the Canadian Association for School Libraries (CASL).

CLA Conference

- The Canadian Library Association (CLA) conference will be held June 2–5, 2010, in Edmonton.
- They are looking for presenters to represent Alberta school libraries.
- There will be an increased emphasis on teacher-librarian strands.
- Linda Shantz-Keresztes is the incoming president of the CLA; she encouraged all ASLC members to become members of the Canadian Association for School Libraries (CASL).

National School Library Day

- National School Library Day is on October 26.
- A call for participation will be coming through the regionals; CASL has a link to ideas on its website.

Proposed ASLC Grant

- It was moved by Diane GallowaySolowan, and seconded by Pat Ropchan, that ASLC initiate sponsorship of three \$600-per-year grants toward tuition costs for three Alberta teachers. These teachers

would be either registered in or considering registration in the first year of the graduate-level teacher-librarianship program at the U of A. Grants would be dispersed upon order of applications received, and the details of the grant application form would be developed by the ASLC executive for September 2009.

- It was moved by Greg Jeffery, and seconded by Irene Masciuch, to defer the above motion for further study by the ASLC table officers committee. Carried.
- A motion for adjournment was made by Irene Masciuch at 5:20 PM.
- The next AGM will be held at the Jasper Park Lodge during the Alberta Library Conference, in spring 2010.

Motions

- It was moved by Diane GallowaySolowan, and seconded by Jill Usher, to accept the agenda as submitted. Carried.
- It was moved by Donna Grove, and seconded by Irene Masciuch, to approve the minutes as presented. Carried.
- It was moved by Donna Grove, and seconded by Diane GallowaySolowan, to approve the 2009/10 budget as submitted. Carried.
- It was moved by Jacquie Vincent, and seconded by Jill Usher, to accept the slate as amended. Carried unanimously.
- It was moved by Lyle Krause, and seconded by Jacquie Vincent, to accept the changes to the ASLC constitution. Carried.
- It was moved by Diane GallowaySolowan, and seconded by Pat Ropchan, that ASLC initiate sponsorship of three \$600-per-year grants toward tuition costs for three Alberta teachers. These teachers would be either registered in or considering registration in the first year of the graduate-level teacher-librarianship program at the U of A. Grants would be dispersed upon order of applications received, and the details of the grant application form would be developed by the ASLC executive for September 2009.
- It was moved by Greg Jeffery, and seconded by Irene Masciuch, to defer the above motion for further study by the ASLC table officers committee. Carried. ✂



Donna Grove presents Lyle Krause, ATA staff advisor, with the ASLC Award of Merit for his outstanding contributions to the ASLC.



Patricia Farley and Sandra Chatelain

Cathy Yusep, Maria Mirka and Yasmin Peerani



Irene Masciuch presents the Lawrence G Wiedrick Award of Merit to Rhonda Hunter for her exemplary work as a teacher-librarian, leader and advocate for school libraries.



Marilyn Price, Tom Colbens, Estela Hottentrager and Linda Shantz-Keresztes



Diane Field, Linda Shantz-Keresztes and Maria Mirka



Judy Walker, Beverly Van Horne, Jane Magee and Neil Martin

From the Regionals

Greater Edmonton

Jill Usher

The Greater Edmonton Regional began the year with some confusion as to who would be president of the regional. As many of you might recall, Betty-Lou Ayers was elected president at our AGM that spring. Later that summer, Betty-Lou also agreed to take on the role of president-elect on the provincial executive. As this was a lot to expect of one person, I offered to cochair or sit as president for one more term.

Our fall executive meeting was held December 9 at Salisbury Composite High School, in Sherwood Park. At that meeting, we decided that we would show support for the two provincial conferences and avoid any conflict for our members by limiting our PD for the year to those two opportunities. In hindsight, based on the number of regional members attending those events, we could have gone ahead with regional PD activities.

At the same meeting, a small ad hoc group was formed to meet on December 13 at Hardisty School, in Edmonton. The purpose was to provide the ASLC perspective and feedback to inform Judith Sykes's work with the Alberta School Library Services Initiative. The resulting draft document was forwarded to the other regionals for their input and then on to Judith.

The first ASLC PD opportunity of the school year was the Kaleidoscope 9 children's literature conference, held in Calgary in November. This conference was a great success. The presenters were fantastic, and attendance surpassed expectations. I was particularly taken with the presentation by Australian author Shaun Tan. I thank the many regional members who volunteered their time and hosted authors during this event.

The second PD event was the Distributed Learning Symposium in March. The ASLC cohosted this event with the Educational Technology Council (ETC) and the Alberta Distributed Education and Technology Association (ADETA). The conference was good but not without its technology glitches, which was rather telling for a conference promoting the use of so much technology. Judith Sykes's presentation on the Alberta School Library Services Initiative was a highlight, as was the opportunity to see what's new or coming soon.

The ASLC's AGM was held in conjunction with the Distributed Learning Symposium. Of interest to our regional, Betty-Lou Ayers has taken over the reins of

provincial president, and Fern Reirson has moved into the role of past president. Our own Janice Sundar is now provincial secretary. At the meeting, a motion was made by Diane Galloway Solowan that the ASLC initiate sponsorship of three \$600-per-year grants toward tuition for three Alberta teachers who are either registered in or considering registering in the first year of the graduate-level teacher-librarianship program at the University of Alberta. The grants would be dispersed upon order of applications received, and the details of the grant application form would be developed by the ASLC executive for September 2009. It was then moved that the first motion be deferred for further study by the ASLC table officers committee. Look for more on this in the near future.

Reorganization of the regionals was discussed, and the following changes will be implemented for the upcoming year:

- Two regionals—North and South
- One president for the North Regional
- Amalgamation of regional finances and all finances to be handled by the provincial treasurer:
 - This will require advance planning. An electronic version of the request form for compensation is under consideration.
 - Regionals will still have someone track funds as they will continue to determine their structure and create an initial budget request. Additional budget requests can be made if needed.

The second regional executive meeting was held April 8 at J Percy Page High School, in Edmonton. Plans for that evening and the AGM were made and put in motion.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the entire regional executive for all their help and support this past year. Although we haven't been as productive in terms of PD as in past years, the Alberta School Library Services Initiative has added an interesting new focus. I look forward to an active and exciting 2009/10, with our new executive members offering new ideas and enthusiasm.

Of Special Note for the Greater Edmonton Regional

Our own Fern Reirson has been nominated for the Follett International Teacher-Librarian of the Year Award. Congratulations to Fern!

Northwest

Paula Anderson

The Grande Prairie Public School District remains the only jurisdiction in this area to employ teacher-librarians in its schools. As of September, the district has 13 schools. We have seen substantial erosion of time spent in our teacher-librarian roles over the past decade. At present, the FTEs range from .30 to .80 in our school libraries.

We meet once a month from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM, with our schools alternating hosting duties. As libraries become busier and teacher-librarians' other teaching duties more stringent, we rarely have everyone able to attend the meetings. Our district's assistant superintendent, Lance Therrien, attends our monthly meetings, bringing issues from central office that keep us connected to and represented in the wider district focus. We are very fortunate to have this support.

Goals and Activities for 2009

- Implementing a new common library system for all district schools—Library 4 Universal (L4U). We engaged in discussions and negotiations with our district tech team as to the timeline for set-up and bug-proofing the conversion. Our goal was to have the system running in all schools by June.
- Hiring a teacher-librarian for our newest school, so that he or she could begin ordering materials and

have the library student-ready for the school's September 2009 opening.

- Reviewing and updating the library assistant (clerk/tech) job description to reflect changing roles and duties in our schools.
- Maintaining quality resources that match and reflect curriculum, student interest and new trends in literature, despite varied school library budgets.
- Keeping an ongoing focus on literacy initiatives in our district and what they mean for libraries and librarians in terms of resources and skills.
- Establishing and implementing joint PD opportunities for the North Regional with Betty-Lou Ayers.
- Engaging in ongoing PD using the *What's New in Children's Literature* handbook.
- Ensuring representation at the ASLC conference in Jasper.

Attending the ASLC annual general meeting is becoming increasingly difficult for our members, because of the distance and the time away from school. Many of our teacher-librarians are involved in district leadership initiatives that take us out of our schools and require substitute teachers; therefore, more time away would be an issue. If any of the ASLC sessions could be managed through video or phone conferencing, that would assuage our guilt about not attending and make us feel part of the provincial fabric.

Wishing all of you a productive time and continued energy for your important work.

Guidelines for Contributors

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- enhance the competencies of school library professionals;
- increase knowledge, understanding and awareness of the role of school library programs in education; and
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Articles from all educators are welcome. Teacher-librarians are especially invited to write about aspects of teacher-librarianship and school library programs that interest them and to share ideas with colleagues. Submissions are requested that will stimulate personal reflection, theoretical consideration and practical application. Articles that present differing perspectives; innovative, cooperatively planned and taught programs; trends and issues in teacher-librarianship; research findings; or reviews or evaluations of learning resources in all media are appreciated. From time to time, the editor may identify specific themes or topics for special issues and invite submissions on these topics.

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